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No. 389

WHY AND HOW.

BY EBBE E. REXFORD.

You ask me why I love you, dear,
And question how I know:
Pray tell me why the sun must shine,
And how the roses blow.
The blossoms know the time to bare
Their sweet hearts to the sun,
Because the sun shines on them, love,
They open, every one.
My heart was like a summer-rose
That waited for the sun,
To touch it ere it burst in bloom.
You smiled. The work was done!
How do I know? Because your name
Makes music in my breast.
Love starts and trembles into flame
To hear itself confessed.
Because my life seems all complete
That was not so before.
I've answered all your questions, love,
And earned one kiss the more.

The Bitter Secret;

OR,

THE HEART OF GOLD.

BY GRACE MORTIMER.

CHAPTER I. TOO LATE.

INFORMATION WANTED—Of Ada Derwent, maiden name Rivers, native place Addiscombe, State of New York, who married Otto Montacute Derwent, in the year 1850, June 10th—or of her child, issue of said marriage. If she, or said child, will communicate with Messrs. Korner & Price, Room 9, No. 9, Warren Street, New York City, they will hear of a long-unclaimed right now completely at their disposal, and greatly to their advantage.

Monica Derwent, only child of the above-mentioned Ada Rivers Derwent, sat by her mother's corpse, reading this announcement in the "personals" of the New York Herald.

She was nineteen years old; her mother had been a widow all that time; they had lived a toilsome and penurious life, and Mrs. Derwent had died yesterday of the "hard times," and now Monica had discovered this promise of prosperity in an old paper, which she had twisted from the stems of a great sheaf of white flowers sent her by the clergyman's daughter, to lay about her bed.

It was an humble-furnished little parlor in a tiny frame cottage, very clean and dainty, and garnished delicately with many a graceful fancy, costing nothing but natural taste.

The body, which lay across the two white-draped windows, was that of a woman of thirtysix, in whose features could be traced the remains of great beauty and refinement; but the slender hands which lay across her bosom were almost transparent, her face was frightfully emaciated, and broad streaks of gray gleamed among her black hair; it was painfully evident that not only sorrow of heart, but actual privation, had brought her to this premature bier.

Monica Derwent was utterly unlike her mother—her features wanted the graceful harmony of hers; also the expression indelibly engraved upon the dead visage, of soft dependence and habitual melancholy, was replaced on the daughter's by one of spirited power and haughty pride; pale, famine-pinched and poorly clad though she was, she would have attracted a second glance anywhere, through the mere power of her princely air, and the dark dignity of her presence. One rare beauty she possessed. Large, finely-shaped, lustrous eyes, black and expressive; her hair, too, had it been artistically dressed, would have won praise for its ebony hue and silken gloss.

In truth, what with her tall, slim figure, which only wanted filling out—poor hungry body that it was—and her proud, innocent, significant face, all she lacked was food, dress, and a fortunate expression to make her pass as a more than usually fine woman.

For more than an hour she had sat poring over the advertisement addressed to her mother, motionless, blind, and deaf; she was looking back over those nineteen years which her mother and she had trodden hand in hand, illumined as they now were by the light of this most unexpected announcement.

The paper was two months old. Two months ago her mother's strength had been, though ebbing, at full enough tide for Dr. Seymour, the village physician, to say to her in his offhand way:

"You're all right, madam—sound at the core. Nothing to be afraid of, if you take a rest and feed up. Your trouble comes from nothing but debility. You don't eat enough, and you work too much. Get off to the seaside, and drink cream and eat chickens. That's my prescription."

Thudily informed that she could not take time to rest, nor afford such expensive luxuries as seashores, cream and chickens, he had shrugged his muscular shoulder in its fine broadcloth coat, pouted out his iron and mouth portentously, and dashed off an iron and quinine mixture, "to be taken three times a day, for six weeks;" and then, accepting her two dollars with all the graceful unconsciousness with which he would have accepted the five-dollar fee from the wealthy Mrs. Milford, relic of the late cracker-merchant of that name, had bowed her smilingly out of his richly-furnished consulting-room, and bowed in the next in line from his elegant waiting-room.

And this foolish woman had crushed up the prescription in her thin, hot nervous hand, as she slowly wended her feeble way home through the driving sleet, for she had no weekly seventy-five cents to spare, the sum which the strengthening mixture would call for, so why should she distress poor Monica with the sight of the prescription? And she sat down to her work again, trying to see the exquisite stitches through the red notes that were dancing before her eyes, and to hide the creeping chills which ran through her shadowy frame, in spite of the sparkling, well-swept fire, which Monica had just lit in time for her return, having furtively let it go out, to save the fuel, in her absence. So she told the satisfactory news that Dr. Seymour said she had no organic disease, and was only weary.



At the moment that Monica fixed hers upon these strange eyes, she caught a look, indescribably wild.

"So, darling," she said, cheerfully, "I won't stick so constantly at the lace-making, but let me relax the strain by doing the housework turn about with you, instead of letting you do it all; but, dear, you will have to learn to sew lace more quickly, or else get a new inspiration, and invent a design more popular than any you have invented yet, make your fortune, and retire with your poor, broken-down mammy. Eh, dearie?"

And whilst the doomed mother was talking thus, trying to smother under these playful speeches the dark conviction that death had marked her, and whilst faithful Monica was listening and looking wistfully at the fading victim of poverty, this advertisement, which seemed to promise prosperity, or, at least, relief, was already in print, calling—calling them to come and be helped, and they had never seen it!

"Too late—oh, agonized thought—too late!" "Merciless Creator!" murmured Monica, raising her black eyes bitterly to the wintry heavens; "your succor comes only to fill higher my cup of despair. My mother has starved to death!"

It seems terrible to own that such a thing is possible in a Christian community like that in which they lived. Loangerie, not a hundred miles distant from that nucleus of splendidly organized charities, Philadelphia, but it was true. Mrs. Derwent and her daughter could afford nothing more costly than the coarsest and simplest food, and the invalid had died for want of better. Her wasted system had demanded just such rich and dainty fare as the comfortable Dr. Seymour had prescribed; she had not the means to procure such, and so, surrounded by good and kind-hearted people, all of whom respected her highly and looked up to her as a superior character—receiving just as much lace-work from a wealthy merchant in the village as she could do, and a handsome price for it, besides the modest but really helpful salary which Monica received in her position of district school-mistress—in spite of all these facts, Mrs. Derwent had died of want.

How had it been? How could it have been?

Was that what Monica was asking herself, as she sat there beside her dead mother, holding the paper that spoke of better days for her?

Was that what brought the lines of painful thought upon her smooth young brow, and lit the moody fire in her eyes?

Yes; Monica was once again groping blindly in the sinister darkness of a secret which her mother had held inviolate during her whole life, and which she had carried to the land of spirits with her.

Mrs. Derwent had always earned a comfortable income from her lace-work, more especially since Monica had developed a talent for designing new and exquisite patterns, which in their graceful originality were eagerly purchased by connoisseurs; and Monica had received, as we have said, enough to maintain herself ever since she was twelve years old, and tall enough to see her scholars' heads over the tall teacher's desk; the neighbors loved and honored the widow and child, and would have been glad to help them, had they been able under these circumstances to dream that they needed help; yet Mrs. Derwent had died the death of helpless destitution.

Where did she put their money?

Monica had grown up under the shadow of this mystery; it had been her one insufferable annoyance, suggesting the only hideous thoughts that ever had entered into her pure and lofty mind; it had eaten and eaten into her reverential love for her mother, until one day, long ago, she had burst out with a passionate demand for some, for any explanation, confessing with grief, that a host of terrible suspicions had crowded her thoughts; so that Mrs. Derwent, at first startled and remonstrant, then out to the heart, had folded her gentle arms about the trembling girl, pillowed her head upon her own swelling bosom, and spoken as follows:

"My child, I had hoped that you noticed nothing that could disturb or perplex you; I see now that my poor little diplomacy is too transparent to blind you. This matter that you have distressed yourself so much about, is the one secret I must keep from all the world—even from you, dear girl. It is a very bitter secret, it has crushed my spirit to the earth for all the years of my widowhood. If it would only please God to remove it, I should be at peace, contented and happy with you, my darling good child. If I were to tell it to you, your dear young life would be overshadowed with a curse which would begeth every hour. And yet it is not for this reason alone that I keep you in ignorance of it, nor is it for my own sake, for I am utterly guiltless in the matter; but there is a person alive for whose sake I keep it, ay, and must keep it as long as I live, and carry it to my grave with me. Now, my darling girl, you must dismiss the matter from your thoughts. You trust in your mother's integrity, do you not? Yes, you do, my sweet; you never really doubted me, I assure you; those ideas which distressed you were only the natural efforts of filial affection to fathom a mystery which obviously clouded your mother's life. All I can say in explanation, dear, is, that as long as I live I am bound to put aside, and secretly to forward to—some one—some one—half of whatever income I may get; even if it were but one dollar a year I must put with fifty cents of it."

And then she had glided away, with a very pained and roused look on her usually meek face, and a sudden haughtiness of mien that struck cold to Monica's heart, suggesting, as it did, certain hidden depths in her mother's character, and events in her past, that came like iron hands pushing them a little apart.

And, although the high-minded daughter had never again whispered another inquiry or looked curiosity; but had put entire faith in her mother's integrity, according to her gentle request, and driven the secret from her mind, as far as that lay in her power, still, we say, there had not passed one day since, that she had not been visited by the consciousness of a something sinister and disastrous brooding over her home.

Half of all she could earn—handed over to a nameless being, as long as she lived!

That was the gist of her mother's secret. But Monica thanked God every day, with passionate gratitude, that she could believe her mother guiltless, and clung to the belief with a desperate hold, heaping only the more love upon her devoted to her the more assiduously fond and unwearied services; fronting fate for her with the loftier courage; for Monica Derwent held reserves of pride and heroism in her warm, deep heart, that even she herself could not fall on as yet, and often marvelled much at her own haughty impulses, so unlike the soft, passive resignation of her sweet mother.

The night before Mrs. Derwent died, she had beckoned her child to her pillow, and with a pale and thankful smile had murmured in her ear:

"Fear nothing from that old sorrow of mine, my darling; with my death the price is fully paid—there is nothing more to give. It dies with me; henceforth you walk free."

As Monica mused with the newspaper in her lap, and her gaze fastened bitterly upon the dead face of her idolized mother, strange thoughts are busy in her brain. She is trying to trace the connection between her mother's secret and this expression in the advertisement, "A long unclaimed right."

From her knowledge of her mother's self-sacrificing, dependent and timorous nature, Monica reasoned that if any sacrifice had been made, any fortunate right allowed to lie unclaimed, it must have been she who had made it—she who had refrained from claiming that right; therefore (and Monica's heart swelled with hot and acrid regret), circumstances had at last so transpired that the fortune, if fortune it was, had sought her through the columns of the everywhere-read New York Herald, since she would not seek it.

And it had come too late—too late.

That was always the heartrending refrain of all Monica's thoughts; here was help for her mother, and it was too late.

By what perversity of destiny had it chanced that not one of the half-a-dozen subscribers to the New York Herald in Loangerie had noticed this announcement, and told her mother of it?

As Monica asked herself this she recalled, with a thrice of fierce rebellion and disdain, the evil repute in which this very column of anonymous communications was held by all Christian people, and as the people of Loangerie were par excellence a most devout and rigid set of Christians, who would as soon own to dancing the can-can as to poring over that disreputable column, it was easy enough to guess that those six deacons who took the paper in Loangerie never perused the advertising sheet or permitted it to fall into the hands of their families; and that so the paragraph which would have saved her mother's life had never been read here.

Was it running still? Or had some spurious claimant, more wide-awake than the doomed widow, snatched at the chance to reap what benefit there was, and was this all that Monica would ever see or hear of the matter?

The girl's haggard face suddenly fired crimson, her eyes sparkled.

She rose and went to her mother's bier, and standing over it, she gazed long at the sweet, cold marble face there, as if she would photograph it, in all its pathetic attenuation and purity, upon her memory.

Yes, she had faithfully believed in her mother, in her goodness, worth, her sweet, proud, pure life, and in her hard ill-usage by an adamant Providence.

There had been something that could not be told. Yes—but it was not shame to her mother. No, no! She had certainly been the dupe of an invisible and sinister power, a vampire which had sucked the life-blood out of her veins until here she lay dead.

And now deliverance had come, and it was too late!

"Let me avenge her—that is all I shall live for!" panted Monica. Derwent, and stooping, she sealed her vow by a long, anguished kiss on her mother's dead lips.

The funeral was over.

Its expenses, humble as they were, had drained Monica's slender purse to a low ebb. She had seen the latest Herald, and the advertisement was running in it still. She was resolved to answer it—to hear what these strangers had to tell her about the "unclaimed right," which she believed to be connected with her mother's secret.

But she was so penniless, that, whilst the kind-hearted neighbors were cheering her by the reminder that she would at least be little the worse pecuniarily by her invalid mother's decease, since her salary as the village teacher was quite adequate to the supply of her own wants, she was casting about in her mind how she should procure money enough not only to journey to New York, but possibly to remain there for some time to come.

She gathered together all her resources; set her cottage in order for an absence, long or short, she knew not which; and without explaining anything to anybody, except to tell the Rector that she was going to New York on business, she left Loangerie the day after the funeral.

And so calm and self-possessed was she when she went from among them, that all Loangerie looked to see her back at her desk in the little frame school-house in a few days, as before; and gladly accorded her the few days' holiday and change, since her bereavement had been sore, and the poor young thing, though she had made little outward moan, seemed to be stricken for death herself.

But busy was the tongue of rumor when the Monday came—Tuesday, Wednesday—a week, two weeks—a month—a year—years—and she never came back to Loangerie!

CHAPTER II.

"MY FATHER! I WILL NEVER OWN HIM FOR MY FATHER!"

MONICA found in room No. 9, Warren Street, Messrs. Korner & Price, two driving and thriv-

ing lawyers, not so long in practice as to pass by indifferently any chance of emolument, crooked or straight, and thirsting to manage this matter with benefit to themselves.

They received the young lady from the country, who introduced herself as the only child of Mrs. Ada Derwent, nee Rivers, of Addiscombe, with due caution and reserve, until satisfied with the proofs of her identity; and although they were at first bitterly disappointed to learn of the decease of Mrs. Derwent herself, they soon accommodated themselves to the inevitable, and set about manipulating the survivor to the best of their ability.

Having gleaned from her a distinct account of her mother's and her own history during the past nineteen years, they coolly desired her to come to them that day week, when they hoped to have something definite to tell her about "the important matter in connection with which they had been advertising at immense expense," as they carefully reminded her, for over four months.

As they were resolute, Monica had perforce to obey, and retired to her boarding-house to wait, feeling a growing interest and excitement, as she noted the portentous manner of the lawyers, and vainly tried to guess at the news they had to tell.

Of course she could guess pretty correctly the use they made of that week: that they were sifting her story and proving its truth; but so judiciously did they conduct their inquiries, sending an agent to Loangerie to investigate, *sub rosa*, that not a soul in the straight-faced little townlet dreamed of what was being done.

Having returned on the specified day, Miss Derwent found herself greeted with fervor, placed in the seat of honor, and both the lawyers bustled about her, vying with each other in showing her how they honored her.

This servility angered and disgusted the proud-spirited girl.

Of course, she knew this was a money matter; guessed at some fine legacy or inheritance, and measured the courtesy of the astute men of affairs by the probable bulk of the fortune.

"Be good enough to come to the point with our ceremony," she said, haughtily, "as you see I am too humbly born and bred to appreciate or expect meaningless compliments. And since this matter did not chance until my mother was gone, it can seem of very little moment to me, in my present state of mind. What care I now what befalls?" she said, bitterly, her low, stern tones sounding in strange contrast to the sterner jubilation and gratulation of theirs.

"Ahem! The family spirit!" chuckled Mr. Korner, surreptitiously nudging his partner, Mr. Price, as if her lofty tone pleased him, and reddening uncomfortably when he saw that her bright eyes had detected him. "The fact is, my dear young lady, that by the merest accident we have discovered something of importance—of great importance to the wife or children of Mr. Otto Derwent."

He paused with an impressive smile, waiting for the tremendous announcement to overwhelm his listener; but she answered, with a gloomy look, utterly regardless of the piquant news he had hinted at:

"As there is only one thing which men in your profession think of enough importance to expend time and talent on, I can easily guess what you are about to tell me. Some relative of my long-dead father has thought of mother, and wishes to assist her pecuniarily. And it is too late."

"Wrong—altogether wrong!" said Mr. Price, with airy enjoyment, and a gallant bow; "Miss Derwent is too unworlily to come near the truth."

"What is the truth, then?" asked she, noting with a little wonder the repressed excitement of each wary visage.

"It would, perhaps, be well to state that this matter is entirely in our hands," said Mr. Korner, very earnestly fixing his eyes on her, and hitching his chair a little nearer hers. "Not a soul but we two can assist you to gain your rights. The facts came to our knowledge some months since, and we have already gone to considerable expense and labor collecting information and advertising. You understand?"

"Perfectly," replied she, promptly, with some disdain. "You wish to impress upon me that your services are valuable, and that you will not continue them unless I can pay for them, and am willing to place myself in your hands. I can only say that I am penniless, and will not pledge myself to any course in the dark."

"Very good; we shan't ask you to do anything but what is perfectly just and right," Mr. Korner hastened to assure her. "And as to your present poverty, the whole business is to relieve you of it, and to put it in your power to recompense our services in the future. Which, of course, a lady of your strict sense of justice would wish to do whenever she had a chance," added he, insinuatingly.

She bowed, with a slight smile; somehow the longer they talked of this mysterious business the more she doubted the wisdom of confiding too much in the crafty pair.

"Just tell her distinctly what it is," put in Mr. Price in an anxious aside; "she can't possibly realize the position until she sees it."

So Mr. Korner settled himself in his chair, and with a bland face and congratulatory tone of voice, spoke as follows:

"In the course of a lawyer's practice many secrets leak out, which those concerned thereby never supposed would come to mortal ears. This is an instance; a secret which has been kept for nineteen years has come to our ears, and affects strongly your future, my dear young lady. I may begin the disclosure by saying that this secret is connected with that habit of the late Mrs. Derwent, of handing over to an unknown party the half of her earnings."

"Stop!" exclaimed Monica, suddenly; her cheek had flushed scarlet, and her eyes were sparkling warningly. "My mother deliberately kept this matter from me; even on her death-bed, she said it was best for me not to know what her secret was; so I will not hear it from you. If you cannot explain this business without betraying my mother's secret, I shall go away as ignorant as I came."

"Hem—ahem—a streak of the blood, eh?" muttered Mr. Korner to his colleague; "no use insisting here; might as well try to move the Palisades, eh?" and with a complacent chuckle he resumed, "Very good, Miss Derwent, we can easily avoid trenching on the forbidden subject. For nineteen years you have supposed

your father was dead; for nineteen years your mother knew he was alive, and residing at his English estate, Dornoch-Weald—

"What?" gasped Monica, springing to her feet. "My father alive!—oh, impossible!" She gazed from one to the other wildly; their faces inexorably repeated the assertion; she suddenly wheeled and walked to one of the windows, where, with her face hidden, and her hands tremblingly clasped over her breast, she remained still as a stone.

But a storm was raging through her soul; the very depths of her nature were stirred. The idea of a father had ever been but an abstract one to her, she had never seen him, never dwelt upon by her mother—she had always seemed to shrink from it with never blunted pain, and Monica had settled it in her mind that he had been so passionately beloved, and so tragically lost in the first year of marriage, that her mother would carry the wound raw and bleeding to her grave.

Yet he had been alive all the while, and what was it they had said about an estate? He was then a rich man, living in wealth and ease, and her mother—had she not been deceived?

As the girl's thoughts reached this climax she stifled a sharp cry as of one stung, and went back to face the whispering lawyers.

"Go on, what else?" she demanded peremptorily.

Mr. Korner took up the narration where he had dropped it.

"Your father is alive to this day; and had your mother lived to answer our advertisement in person we would have reinstated her in her rights without the slightest delay. She being unfortunately deceased, we transfer our good offices to you; and whenever you choose to put yourself in our hands we shall present you to Mr. Otto Derwent, and claim for you your legal rights as his daughter."

"But—but—why were they separated?" faltered Monica, still too stunned to admit a thought of her own position.

"That is part of the secret your mother reserved from you," answered the lawyer; "this much I can tell you, however, she was selected through no fault of your mother's. She was utterly blameless, the victim of a slander, and of the bitter pride of Derwent. Your father comes of an ancient, proud race, and notwithstanding that really seems to have loved his young wife (who was extremely pretty and elegant, they tell me, although only the daughter of a country schoolmaster), he was quite able to desert her at a moment's notice seven months after the marriage, and to go home to his fine estates, and never see her again."

To do him justice I will mention that he intended to have sent her all the money she could desire, and began by doing so; but she had her pride too, poor soul, and, besides, was also misled as to something she supposed him to be guilty of, and she fled from the home he had left her in, and hid herself in the little out-of-the-way hole you came from; so that for nineteen years they have not communicated with each other, and he does not know whether she is dead or alive. And he stood motionless never to trouble his head about the matter; but lived the life of a country gentleman, on one of the finest estates in—shire, whilst she, poor soul, was starving herself to satisfy the rapacity of a swindling villain who took advantage of her."

"Take care—that's the forbidden subject," interposed Mr. Price, who was reading the expressive face of the daughter with breathless interest, almost fascinated by its vivid changes.

"Will you now be good enough to inform me what your intentions with regard to your mother were, when you advertised for her?" demanded she, between her teeth.

"Oh, you can easily guess them," said Mr. Korner, cheerfully. "We saw a chance to render justice to two people who had been parted by a mistake, to set the wife in her own place and to clear her reputation in the eyes of her husband. We proposed to put each party in possession of some facts which had come to our knowledge, to effect a reconciliation, and to have had the pleasure of seeing her and her two lives happy. We now propose, the wife being gone, to introduce you, the daughter, with all the proofs of your identity in your hands, to your father, who as yet is ignorant of your existence when you will, without the slightest doubt, receive due recognition as the only child of a very wealthy man."

Monica sat still as death for a few minutes, eying her counselors with slowly gathering scorn. When her heart was full to bursting, her small teeth set in her lip, and her glance flashing with pent-up feeling, she burst out passionately:

"And this is my poor mother's history, is it? Scorned—betrayed—abandoned—perishing in want—because he believed a slander! Oh, God! what a demon!"

She wrung her hands, in a gust of grief; it was easy to see how intensely the proud fine soul of the daughter had loved and believed in her father's mother.

"And you wish me to go to the man who did this, and to fawn at his foot for my rights?" she cried flashing from grief to the most scathing fury and contempt. "You expect me to go, straight from the grave of my mother, with the memory of her skeleton form and unhappy eyes, and my only remaining one of her, torn and sad—to that noble estate where my father lives luxuriously and thinks scornfully of his poor young wife! Why, gentlemen, are you human, that you think I could do it? I should curse him, and call on God to avenge my mother's blood on his head, instead of kneeling in humble duty for his paternal greeting! Ha! ha! ha! My father, forsooth!"

She was rapidly walking from end to end of the office now, panting with excitement and emotion, and flinging glances of the utmost derision and disdain at her would-be counselors.

Mr. Price, whose softer manners made him usually successful with the lady-clients, approached her with deep solicitude, delicately tempered with deference, and begged her, for her own sake, to calm herself, and look practically upon the matter.

"Just think of it, dear Miss Derwent," he plaintively urged. "How few in this world of hard work and crowding competition can, like you, step from dire poverty and friendlessness into a wealthy and refined home. Be a rich man's only daughter—with every chance in life of being his sole heiress—be it to a fortune worth twenty thousand pounds a year."

"You have said enough," she cried sternly. "I understand you perfectly. Because he is a wealthy man, you will kindly trouble yourselves to effect an acknowledgment of his child, as you would have effected a reconciliation with his wife—simply with a view to your own future reward. Had he been a poor man, the knowledge which he had actually obtained, and which you could use to remove the obstacles between two mistaken people—would have remained forever locked in your own breasts. Oh, yes, I clearly comprehend the position as far as you are concerned. But I am a free agent, you cannot oblige me to present myself to Mr. Otto Derwent in the character of long-lost daughter and heir-expectant. Let his money go where it will—I shall touch none of it. I should choke upon his bread—thinking how my mother died for want of it. I should writhe under his caressing hand, remembering how it flung aside my mother with a broken heart."

"But, oh, come now," remonstrated Mr. Korner, with growing anxiety, for neither of them had ever dreamed of any opposition from their client—who in their senses would reject a fortune? "Consider the case, my dear lady; consider it calmly, and don't rush to conclusions in this irrational way; there is so much to be told yet, and after all, he is your father."

"Don't call him my father," cried Monica, passionately. "I cannot and will not consider him my father. He who cast off my mother with insulting suspicions, expressed so cruelly that she scorned to appeal to him again. Never will I starve—shall I own—"

"Wait, my dear lady," Mr. Price, interposed Mr. Korner, again begged. "Pray, pray, be seated again, and let us explain this thing; you

are rushing on at a mad pace. Your father—"

"Do you persist in the term?" cried she, impatiently. "Then I shall not stay to be insulted by it."

She hurried, with burning cheeks, to the door; the pair sprung with one accord to arrest her, and she turned, between them, clasped her hands, and looking Heavenward, said solemnly:

"So help me God, I repudiate Mr. Otto Derwent as my father, even as he repudiated Ada Rivers as his wife."

"But you are terribly mistaken—when we reveal all—if you would but promise to place yourself in our hands, we could disclose enough of the truth in three words to secure your consent to our scheme."

"Keep your secret, I have learned enough to show me what I ought to do," said she. "However, lest I might make the terrible mistake you so dread, I shall ask you a few questions; so, gentlemen, I beg you will please to answer plainly what I ask," said she, reseating herself with a gloomy decision in her manner.

"Did Mr. Derwent authorize you to search for his wife?"

"After a hurried consultation by glances, the senior lawyer answered, 'No.'"

"Does he know anything whatever about your movements?"

"No."

"And this action is undertaken solely upon your own authority, and merely in hopes of future business?"

"Oh, come, come—not quite so bad as that," protested the man of affairs, winningly; "surely no one, with the chance accidentally placed in his power to see justice done the innocent and helpless, could fail to do otherwise than we propose to do by you."

"You say that Mr. Derwent separated from my mother because someone slandered her. Did he give her any chance to vindicate herself, or did he abandon her without explanation?"

"N-no—that is to say, yes. I fear he must plead guilty to this charge; still, when you hear—"

"Now, this is the last question," said she, with a faint, bitter smile. "Has Mr. Derwent ever, to your knowledge, expressed either contrition at his early conduct, or indicated a wish to find my mother, to reinstate her in her rights?"

"Tell me the truth," cried she, sternly. "Do not dare to deceive me!"

And, for once in his life, singularly averted by the dark menace of a woman's eye, the lawyer blurted out the awkward truth, and spoiled all his pretty scheme.

"No, never."

She rose, folding her poor little crape mantle about her shoulders, as an empress might have folded the royal purple.

"Then, gentlemen," said she, passing a resolute and cruel revelation look from one disconcerted face to the other, "I beg leave to retire from this field at once, and permanently. For nineteen years I have lived without the aid of a father; I can live the rest as well. For nineteen years I have seen the face of my mother's selfishness of my father, and I have toiled for my bread, and eaten it sweetly, because it was clean, and did not come from his sullied hands. I shall not forget her sufferings, or abuse myself for the rest of my years. Your scheme is defeated; I will have nothing to do with it. Good-day."

And before the astounded practitioners could open their frozen mouths to protest she had gone.

CHAPTER III.

OUT ON THE QUEST.

Monica went back to her private boarding-house, locked herself into her cheerless, threadbare fourth-story bedroom, and thought.

This day of her life had been made to her; the first shock was not yet over; she felt sick and benumbed, like one who has had a terrible fall; she knew not as yet what of her bones were broken and what remained to her sound.

She had been taught to believe her father dead in the first year of her mother's married life, and so seldom talked of, and then so vaguely, that he had ever been but a faint, poetical, and abstract idea, floating in tender shades in which her girlish fancy revelled. And instead of the first year of her mother's married life, she had been nursing him at every fresh pang inflicted by a hard and bitter life upon her mother.

For while she was suffering cold, hunger, loneliness, heart-break and hopelessness, he, a score of years ago, was thinking wicked evil of her, and in no want of her.

Monica laughed to herself, with mockery scorn as she recalled the lawyer's scheme—that she should present herself to her patrician sire, and the character of a fond and favoring daughter, she whose very existence had been ignorant, she, the issue of that brief and luckless union, the inheritor of her mother's wrongs—the self-imposed avenger. Oh, what a comedy!

She laughed, sitting there by herself, so lonely, and so wildly that footsteps came hurriedly to her door through the long strange passage, and ears listened in affright, marveling whether the new boarder was going mad.

So she snuffed her hysteria, laid her head down, and the messenger little marble-topped table beside the frowsy map of New York, bound in ill-smelling leather, her head that was so hot, while her feet were like ice, and she tried to soften her heart, and to pray to God, with whom her dear martyred mother was; but she could not think of those who had died for her, and the flow of many tears, and the wasting of much hunger and pain; of those scarlet lips, pale and compressed by the repressing of many sobs and the enduring of nights and days of humiliating thoughts.

For Monica was thinking of revenge—revenge on her father.

Only she never called him "father," in her thoughts, never permitted herself to picture him when he was never present in her mind. Her mother was a beautiful young village daughter, with her diamond bright eyes resting sweetly on his, and her velvet scarlet lips drinking in his breath, in Love's Young Dream! No, rather would she think of those who had died for her, and the flow of many tears, and the wasting of much hunger and pain; of those scarlet lips, pale and compressed by the repressing of many sobs and the enduring of nights and days of humiliating thoughts.

She had so far resolved, that she would follow the lawyer's wishes in that she would go to England and confront Mr. Derwent, but not in the character of his heiress expectant. Not that.

As her mother's avenger.

By-and-by, as the whirl of her excitement abated, she could recall practical details.

And among the first she remembered, with a great pang of disappointment, that she had not even allowed them to give her Mr. Derwent's address, and how was she to find him? Not for would she think of those who had died for her, and the flow of many tears, and the wasting of much hunger and pain; of those scarlet lips, pale and compressed by the repressing of many sobs and the enduring of nights and days of humiliating thoughts.

Fortunately they had no clue to her present whereabouts, and could not, were they ever so anxious, trace her; and of one of her instant resolutions had been to elude them altogether, and make her way, unsuspected by living soul, to Mr. Derwent's mansion, enter it in disguise, and after reconnoitering, she would be better able to cope with the cruel nature which had sacrificed her mother.

Suddenly she recalled the name they had mentioned—Dornoch-Weald, in—shire.

She sat up with sparkling eyes; she had found the clue; it would be easy to trace the country seat of a wealthy county family, once she was in that county.

Before she rose from that fateful reverie, Monica Derwent had determined upon her course—a course which was to lead her, all unwitting of its tremendous possibilities, through as strange and terrible an experience as ever placed before unwary foot.

She said:

"I will go and see this Otto Montacute Derwent, who has spoiled my mother's life, and what heartless cruelty he has dealt her, will I render to him again."

But the sinister shade of another influence stood behind her, gibbering of the awful future, and she saw it not.

Well, she must go at once to Britain, if she would elude the probable search of the New York lawyers, who had set their hopes upon her as a valuable client. She knew that it was not likely they had gone to the immense and trouble of advertising for her mother unless they saw a good chance of reimbursing themselves; also, that they would have no stone unturned to trace her again, in the expectation of overhauling her objections, and molding her to their own purposes. So she dared not return to Longerie, even though she possessed not ten dollars in the world, until she went back to her school to earn it.

But Monica was brave in this, the outset of her singular career.

She felt ready to face anything, her burning indignation against the living and her holy love for the dead upholding her untried courage.

The time was not yet come when she could recall enough of her terrible experience, the true horror of fear; she knew not its haunting visage as yet, for how can one imagine that which has not yet a shape in the mind?

By dint of calm and vigilant search, she found a way to cross the ocean three days after her departure in New York. She read in her old friend the *Herald*, an advertisement for a child's *bonne*, to travel with a lady and her infant to England. She answered in person, found the lady at a fashionable hotel, very ill, very languid, her face pale, and her hands cold. Apparently taken at once by the quiet, grave and refined demeanor of the applicant, Mrs. Frothingham beckoned her to approach close to the sofa upon which she reclined in her crimson shawl, and fixing her lustrous, hollow eyes on her face, poured out her trials, her helplessness, her requirements, and her anticipated sufferings, in low, purring accents flavored strongly of the Southern plantation.

"So thankful to see anybody as presentable as you, my dear, that I shall not deign to deign to know it, you at all points with me. I am ordered to England to be under the care of Sir Fretwell Malade, the eminent ladies' physician; I may be there a year; perhaps not so long; it depends upon my recovery; and if you suit you will stay, and if not, you may go."

Monica had gently arrested her in the even flow of her languid prattling, by putting up her slender, shapely hand, at which the lady stared sharply, recognizing perhaps through the cheap glass glove the unusual delicacy of the supposed physician's maid, with the legend underneath,

"I am sorry to disappoint you, Mrs. Frothingham," said Monica, calmly, "but I can stay no longer with you than to cross the ocean in charge of the child; instantly upon my arrival I shall have to leave you. I am extremely disappointed if this will not suit you, for I am obliged to go to England, and I have no money to pay the passage, and so must go in this or some similar way."

The Southern lady, accustomed to have no responsibility whatever upon her delicate shoulders, looked blank enough at this announcement, and pitiously bewailed her hard fate.

"I thought it was too good to be true that I should get such a capable, wise, superior person to go with me," she bemoaned; "and Celeste is so kind, and I shall not be obliged to do it, and it is extremely honorable of you to tell me at once, and not make a tool of me as you could so easily have done. You see, dear, I am utterly unaccustomed to rough it by myself, as these dreadful, independent, self-reliant, North-ladies are. I have not been in England for six months, and he used to do everything—he and the blacks; I never had to even purchase a ribbon for myself, he did it all, or to pick up my own handkerchief, they were always on hand, a score of times a day, or on the day. But you will cross with me. That is enough for the present," she resumed in a minute. "I am overcome with the fatigue of examining applicants, and will put off the evil day, now I have gone to London. Come to me at once, for we start to-morrow at noon. By the way, what is your name?"

Monica was prepared for this question.

"My name is Monica Rivers," she answered, adding her mother's surname to her own.

She added her mother's name to her own, bearing her patronymic; she wished not to cite his attention until she had studied him well. And as she expected to gain access to his patrician mansion only in some menial character, she had no object now in assuming any name but her own. She had not been in England for six months, and he used to do everything—he and the blacks; I never had to even purchase a ribbon for myself, he did it all, or to pick up my own handkerchief, they were always on hand, a score of times a day, or on the day. But you will cross with me. That is enough for the present," she resumed in a minute. "I am overcome with the fatigue of examining applicants, and will put off the evil day, now I have gone to London. Come to me at once, for we start to-morrow at noon. By the way, what is your name?"

"A furrier!" muttered one voice in the quickly gathering crowd.

"Looks like one o' thes' run-women," suggested a second.

"Where can she come from, for to look to Dornoch for hotels and the like?" grumbled a third.

"Let me step inside, please; I shall take supper here," said the object of remark, anxious to escape from these candid expressions of the people's opinions; and thus set in a path mine ho mechanically lumbered on in it; with a dumb-struck air he led her into the inn parlor, and set her by the hearth upon which a grand fire of fagots was roaring and crackling, and sending its glimmering reflections all up and down the rain-soaked walls and the burnished brazen ornaments on the rude shelves.

She sunk upon the broad wooden settle with a long sigh; she was so weary that everything she saw in this strange new world looked dream-like and unreal, and she herself was beginning to seem another being, with nothing left of the original Monica Derwent save a wound which quivered in pain when she remembered her mother.

She was left alone while the landlord strolled out to regain his senses and to find his spouse. She tried to stagger to the window for another gaze at the turrets of Dornoch-Weald, but her limbs refused to bear her, and she curled down again in the corner of the uncushioned dais, and soon succumbed to the resistless influence of slumber's three handmaids, Weakness, Weariness, and Warmth.

Dim and distant came the tramp and bustle of the noisy inhabitants of the "Dornoch Arms;" mine ho lumbered in with his wife at his heels, a tall stalwart female like a grenadier, who approached to shake her guest roughly awake, but was arrested by the mute refinement of the small pale face and the long silken lashes, and who then busied herself clatteringly about the supper-table; two chambermaids slipped in under cover of asking for orders from their imperious mistress, but with the real intention of slaking their curiosity about the "young wench" who talked "half furen," and ordered round her like a duchess; the bay of dogs came on the light evening breeze, and sent mine ho, his wife, and the chambermaids, all in directions in mad haste; the clang of horses' iron-plated hoofs sounded galloping nearer and nearer; the court-yard filled with noise and clamor, voices shouting, loud laughter, the occasional whinny of a favorite steed or the whimper of a wounded hound; then heavy footsteps came, with the jangle of spurs and slash of hunting rattan across the stone hall, and two men stood before the sleeping girl lying on the settle, in the bright blaze of firelight.

"Fon my life—see here, Rufus!" exclaimed a deep rough voice, "what d'ye suppose this means?"

"Means the advent of something spicy to our hunting dinner, by Jove—a regular snow-drop—but hush—" replied another voice in a cautious undertone.

Another step (Monica thought she was dreaming all this) another step came slowly and majestically across the oak floor as it is in dreams; it seemed to be a long, long time in coming; so long indeed that she waited for it with gradual

CHAPTER IV.

THE MASTER OF DORNOC-WEALD.

The hamlet of Dornoch, among the hills and fastnesses of—shire, presented a picturesque enough aspect to the weary eyes of the young woman who entered it one gusty evening in the end of March, on the top of the country stage-coach, which carries the mails and passengers from the railway station, Linlith, twenty miles off.

She had been traveling all day, in steamer, rail-car, and coach; she was not yet completely recovered from the enervating effects of her rough and sea-sick passage across the Atlantic, and the tiresome swimming of the head consequent on the sea voyage, had not yet left her.

But Monica Derwent possessed a prompt and determined spirit not to be delayed or discouraged by anything short of impossibility.

Having left the quiet nest of her sheltered girlhood, she found her wings both broad and strong, and was now swooping on swift pinion, like an eagle on its prey.

Arrived in Liverpool, it had not taken her long to discover where to find the information she required, that is, the address of Otto Derwent. The peerage was handed her by the shopman; leaving it rapidly over she soon had her small tapered finger-tip upon this passage, under the illustrious heading:

"FELTRIE, FAMILY NAME DERWENT."

"Otto Montacute Derwent, Master of Feltrie, Hoarshire, family seat, Dornoch-Weald, —shire, Born July 10, 1827. Only son of Copeland Montacute Derwent, Master of Feltrie, Hoarshire. Appointed chief secretary to the Government of—shire, 1854, resigned 1860. Created lord lieutenant of—shire, 1860, and still serves. Never married. Next of kin and heir expectant, Geoffrey Kilmory, eldest son of Marina Derwent, sister to Otto Montacute, married to Salter Kilmory, manufacturer, Cornhill."

Monica flashed so vividly over the words, "never married," as she bent her graceful head over the page, that the vulgar cockney bookseller tried to peep over her shoulder to see what on earth the young woman was reading that excited her so; but she closed the book, quietly thanked him for his civility in letting her look at it, and glided out. And two hours afterward she was aboard a coast steamer, borne over the chopping, sickening coast waves, North, death-sick, and weary beyond words, but inexorably resolved to continue on her way until she stood face to face with Otto Montacute Derwent, Master of Feltrie, and Dornoch-Weald.

All night surging with roar and grind and tremor through the swashing sea; at gray dawn whirling in a cold, contracted rail-car through that green meads and wet black earth-furrows, where the ridged snow still lies; up, further and further North, at midday standing, dizzy and faint on the platform of the station at the market town of Linlith, the nearest to Dornoch village; then set high in air by the sway of the brown, panting, steam-driven, hairy coach-driver, whose gnarled hands grasp the "ribbons" of his four enormous spankers scientifically, and whose conversation consists in sulphurous oaths delivered to his steeds, and now, at last she is rolling through the roughly-maintained principal street of Dornoch; her glittering eyes straining away over the heads of the quaintly-dressed villagers at the lordly turrets and shining windows of her father's home.

It lies, perhaps a mile beyond the last thatched-roofed hut of Dornoch; it is set proudly upon a gentle eminence, not so steep or embowered in trees as to conceal from these questioning eyes the velvet expanses of its rolling parks and broad garden-aces; the grand house of Dornoch-Weald, with its encircling pleasure grounds, occupies a circular tract of some two hundred acres in the heart of a forest, in which may be seen some of the finest and oldest timber in England.

This forest, with its preserves, its charcoal fires, and its stretching wealth of wood, as well as the whole village of Dornoch, are described in the title-deeds of the estate of Dornoch-Weald; Feltrie, the other estate, and the older, from which he derives his distinctive title of Master, lies in another county, not far from the town of Dornoch, and here, but far to decay, ever since one of the gay Derwents of the last century filled the sacred halls with rout and lasciviousness, and was finally murdered in the banquet hall by one of his vile companions.

On and on went her thoughts; her face contracted, her soft red mouth compressed. Fire shot from her frowning eyes; she was looking along her vengeful future, lit up by the torch of her mother's wrongs. She forgot the stranger standing before her; she forgot the quaint old English inn; she saw nothing, but the baleful flicker of her chosen mission.

The sudden scratching and scurrying of dog-feet across the slippery floor roused her; she started violently, and looked at the stranger's face was within three feet of hers, and his strange eyes were riveted upon her in breathless, wondering scrutiny.

"Stop. Excuse me, young lady, but—who are you?"

There was something in the low iron voice, in the wide, vivid eye, which overawed and mastered her.

As if in a dream she sank back again, never feeling the cold, sharp nose of the hound as it trailed over her hands in suspicious examination, nor realizing the eccentricity of the question; and said:

"Monica Rivers."

She saw the eager expectancy of his gaze quench like a light blown out, a moment of blank vacancy, then, as if by magic, the dilated pupil, and a sudden glare of fury and contempt, succeeded by a scowl of curiosity, which remained.

"Rivers? May I trouble you to explain what Rivers? You speak like an American."

How did he know that? How did he know that her accent was pure enough, and fortunately unmarked by any provincialism or dialectism whatever. How had he guessed? A dark thought shot into her mind.

"I am an American," she replied, meeting his frowning auguries with a defiant flash of repulsion, "and my family is entirely unknown. I am a Rivers—that is all I know."

"Be explicit," said he, in a lower, and yet somehow, a more iron and domineering tone. "Who is your mother—your father? From what part of the United States have you come? Answer me, child. I have, perhaps you may find, some right to demand information on these points from you."

Monica started to her feet, panting and agitated. Her eyes flashed, she thought, wildly; "Yes, this is he, and he is in his unearthly clairvoyance, discovered me."

But a second thought resolved her to force the recognition from him, rather than herself avow it; so she answered, proudly:

"My parents are good, so is father! Her accent was pure enough, and fortunately unmarked by any provincialism or dialectism whatever. How had he guessed? A dark thought shot into her mind.

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ally intensifying curiosity; at last it seemed to halt between the two speakers, and in a deep silence (she went on dreaming) a pair of burning eyes were fastened upon her face.

And she awoke to lift up her own eyes and to find this true.

It was with a singular shock that Monica first met those orbs. They were large, the pupils dilated and intensely black, with a surrounding iris like a ring of fire; well cut, widely-open eyes, and sheltered by eyebrows of jetty black, drawn straight across a brow as white and cold as monumental marble, and deeply depressed half-way between the eyebrows and the hair. At the moment that Monica fixed hers upon these strange eyes, she caught a look, indescribably wild, and accompanied by a sudden paleness of all the features; fascinated, horrified, she did not move; she felt a ghastly constriction of the heart, and her breath coming in painful gasps, as if from under a mountain.

A smothered laugh broke the weird spell; the eyes released hers; their owner bowed with majestic dignity and turned away.

One of the young men in tarnished scarlet hunting-coats had touched his comrade's elbow, and was endeavoring to stifle his merriment.

They were both glancing from her, as she sat up with flaming cheeks, and but half-aroused faculties, in her corner, to the owner of the eyes. She, too, in all her embarrassment, gazed earnestly after this person as he strode to the window and leaned his arm on the sash, and his head on his arm.

He was tall, portly; his fine jet-black hair waved in careless locks over his broad pale forehead and fell about his coat-collar; his hands as they gleamed in the fire-light, seemed white as a woman's, and broad and muscular as an athlete's; his costume was a well-worn hunting one, richly appointed, but utterly devoid of ornament other than the necessary items of handsome hunting-gear.

The two younger men, having decorously banished their chuckling amusement at the episode of the young lady's spellbound stare into the older man's eyes, strolled outside to cross-question the landlord; and Monica recovered her composure, resettled herself in her corner, and turned a quiet look upon the fire.

Suddenly the stranger wheeled, saw her sitting calmly there, and strode with a firm, quick tread to the opposite side of the wide hearth-stone; where, with his elbow resting on the tall mantel shelf, and his gaze also turned quietly on the fire, he stood motionless as a statue, and not unlike one of the grand old Knights Paladin, with frame worthy of the heavenly achievements of those rude days of glory.

Without looking again at him, Monica mutely made up her mind that this was one of the lords or landholders of the neighborhood, and wondered whether Mr. Otto Derwent had been at the hunt, whether he also would come into the inn parlor.

"I shall know him when he comes," she mused with a swelling heart. "He must be about forty-three now, a stout, middle-aged man, with mixed hair, and a hard or sinister expression."

On and on went her thoughts; her face contracted, her soft red mouth compressed. Fire shot from her frowning eyes; she was looking along her vengeful future, lit up by the torch of her mother's wrongs. She forgot the stranger standing before her; she forgot the quaint old English inn; she saw nothing, but the baleful flicker of her chosen mission.

The sudden scratching and scurrying of dog-feet across the slippery floor roused her; she started violently, and looked at the stranger's face was within three feet of hers, and his strange eyes were riveted upon her in breathless, wondering scrutiny.

"Stop. Excuse me, young lady, but—who are you?"

There was something in the low iron voice, in the wide, vivid eye, which overawed and mastered her.

CHRISSE.

BY HAWORTH.

I am thinking to-night of a lady,
As fair as an hour, I ween;
As bright as a vision of Heaven
And as sweet as a poet's dream.

On her sweet face the dearest smile lingers,
On her hair the light loves to rest;
And her ripe lips seem fashioned for kisses—
Her lily hands made to be pressed.

In her bosom all virtues are center'd;
To deck her all graces combine;
In her heart's a fit dwelling for angels—
A beautiful temple and shrine.

In the glance of her bright eye is beaming
The light of a pure soul within;
And her song, like the birdlings', betokens
A spirit that knoweth no sin.

Oh! I love you, winsome lady,
More than miser loves his gold—
More than saintly hope of Heaven,
More than all that earth can hold!

And my heart, within the shadow
That must lie our lives between,
Sadly will be brooding ever
O'er the joys that "might have been."

Detective Dick;

OR,

THE HERO IN RAGS.

BY CHARLES MORRIS,

AUTHOR OF "WILLFUL WILL," "NOBODY'S BOY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DETECTIVES' RECEPTION.

We must leave Dick Darling awhile in his mysterious disappearance, and pay a flying visit to Philadelphia, to the residence of our government detectives, Jack Bounce and Will Frazer.

Somewhat we always find them at home and in much the same position, Jack with his feet on the window sill, in fat and hearty enjoyment of life, and Will in a lean fret about the desperate discouragements of business.

Not that they spend all their time thus. They are expert and active in their vocation, and are shrewdly working up the minor clues which they have so far gained from Dick. As yet, however, their success has not been great. Sol Sly, in particular, has taken warning from his temporary arrest, and has fallen back into the most correct man of business.

"It is devilish slow work Jack," protested Will, pacing the floor in his uneasy way. "I know the Jew has something to do with it, but we can't nail him."

"The whole crew of them have taken fright for the present," was Jack's rejoinder. "Since that last note was offered they have gone back into their skins. They must have smelt a rat somewhere."

"Not they. I have just heard that it has been set adrift on the New York market. A full dozen of them have turned up in the banks, and the Lord knows how many are adrift."

"So much the better," exclaimed Jack, rubbing his hands with satisfaction.

"How do you make that out?" Will sharply questioned.

"The more daring they are the better our chances, that is all. I don't like to see them drawing back into their holes."

"That boy is a shrewd young rogue," Will suddenly declared.

"Aha! you've come to that opinion, then?" "Yes. He has put us on the only track yet. And he knows more than he cares to tell."

"All in good time. I have great faith in Dick. He has some big thing in his eye."

Their conversation was interrupted by a knock upon the door. Will hastened to open it. It was a chambermaid who announced:

"There's a lady in the rear parlor wishes to see you."

"A young lady?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. We will be there."

"That's the way; as soon as a fellow gets comfortably settled," muttered Jack, rising heavily from his chair. "If it wasn't a young lady, Will, I would leave you to see her, but you are too soft-hearted to be trusted alone with the girls."

"I'll be right back," cried Will, laughing. "Why, my heart is a millstone compared with the soft affair you carry about in that bosom of yours."

"All right," and Jack uttered a deep sigh. "Slander won't do out while this world lives. I suppose I shall have to bear my share of it."

"Yes, poor martyr," and Will slapped him heartily on the shoulder as they descended the stairs. "Folks will never appreciate your peculiar hard-heartedness."

Jack looked with eyes of admiration on the beautiful face of the young lady who advanced a step to meet them as they entered the parlor. She was seemingly too nervous to quietly await their entrance.

"You will excuse my disturbing you," she said, in a sweet voice. "I called upon you regarding a matter about which I have been rather uneasy."

"Certainly, miss. We shall be glad to help you, spoke out Jack gallantly, helping himself to a chair, while Will, with greater gallantry, handed one to the lady.

"I am told that you are government detectives, and are concerned here in seeking out the counterfeiters, who have issued so many false notes."

"I don't know how you found that out, miss," exclaimed Jack, in surprise. "People in general look upon us as two very quiet and innocent hotel boarders."

"It seems that you have been detected," she confessed, with a faint smile. "My information came from a good source."

"So it appears," admitted Will. "What can we do for you, miss?"

"Of course you are aware of the arrest of Mr. Spencer, on the charge of being connected with these forgers?"

"Oh, certainly," and Jack drew up his chair with quick interest.

"I believe—I know he is innocent," she continued, earnestly; "but I am not conversant with the particulars of the charge against him. Will you be kind enough to tell me if it is a very serious case?"

Her voice trembled as she spoke. Jack's face was full of kindly feeling as he replied:

"I am sorry, miss, that I do not know more about it. This arrest has been made by the Pinkerton officers. I do not put much faith in it."

"I thought you would know all about it," she said, falteringly.

"No. Only the general features of the charge have been made public yet," answered Will. "We know no more than you of its hidden point, which will only come out upon the trial. Our investigations have taken a different direction."

"That was one of my objects in coming here," she now answered, with an eager light

in her face. "From what you know of the real criminals, from your long and close investigation, you can point suspicion in the proper direction; you can assure me that the evidence against him is of no value."

Jack coughed in an embarrassed manner, while Will had sudden business at the window, leaving his associate to explain the valuable results of their researches.

A knock at the door was a welcome diversion. Will hastened to open it, and found the same chambermaid who had before knocked at their door.

"A letter for Mr. Frazer," she announced. "And there is a man down stairs, sir, as wants to see you both."

"Very well. Tell him we will see him in a few minutes," answered Will, impatiently, partly shutting the door, and hastening to open the letter.

"You know the charges against Mr. Spencer?"

"About the counterfeit notes being found in his room? Oh, yes."

"It has a serious look."

"But I know it must have been the work of some enemy," she cried, in an excited tone.

"Excuse me," interrupted Will. "This is a letter from Boston, Mr. Bounce."

"Ah! any trace of the parties?"

"Yes; the whole story is true. Mrs. Milton still lives there. She was much excited by my agent's questions. She still mourns for her lost son. He could tell her nothing, of course. She may come to Philadelphia to see us."

"I am afraid we can tell her no more," Jack declared.

"The boy can. We must refer her to Dick."

"Excuse us for entering into a private conversation," apologized Jack to the lady. "It is another important matter in which we are interested. You think, then, that Mr. Spencer has been injured by an enemy?"

"I am sure of it," she responded, excitedly. "Have you any idea by whom?"

"I cannot say," she answered, more thoughtfully.

"Think a moment. Do you know any one who has expressed enmity, or who has shown an unfriendly feeling to him?"

"None who could have sought to injure him in this way," was her slowly-given answer.

"Perhaps not. We officers have a habit of considering so many little points. Always hoping something may turn up, you know. Will you please name any person who has seemed unfriendly to him?"

"I do not know that he is specially unfriendly," reluctantly. "He repeated some slanders against Mr. Spencer, and even used some vague threats. It was but a momentary spleen, though."

"Will you be kind enough to name this person?"

"It was Mr. Andrew Williamson."

"Mr. Williamson?" spoke a quick voice at the door, in a tone of great surprise. "Excuse me," said the speaker, entering. "The girl told me to come right up; and I inadvertently overheard some of your words. What—Miss Andrews?"

"I am just going, Mr. Spencer," she said, rising, while her hand visibly trembled.

"I hope my thoughtless intrusion has not annoyed you. You spoke of slanders against me, and by Mr. Williamson's son?"

"Yes, sir," she replied, reluctantly.

"I know him," he replied. "He has seemed specially friendly to me."

"Who is this Mr. Williamson?" asked Jack Bounce, quickly.

"He is an attorney, whose office is at Fourth and Walnut."

"Have you any other known enemies?" asked Jack, as he made a memorandum of the address given him.

"I know of no others."

"You must not take a wrong impression concerning Mr. Williamson," remarked Miss Andrews, with nervous intonation. "I am sorry I used his name. He is a gentleman—hasty and prejudiced perhaps, but, of course, incapable of anything criminal."

"There are many things of course to young ladies that are not of course to us doubting Thomases," Will Frazer reminded her.

"I must go now. I am obliged to you for your kindness. Good day, Mr. Spencer."

Will politely opened the door for her. Harry Spencer stood irresolutely for a moment, then—saying hastily to the officers: "I will see you again"—hastened out after her.

Jack Bounce twisted himself round to look at Will, with a comical smile on his face.

"That's a kind of thing that don't often get in our way. A sort of pastoral poem."

"There wasn't much said, but wonderful expression of looks and tones," replied Will, laughing.

"Spencer has a hankering for her, that's sure," declared Jack. "And I fancy her taste runs to Williamson."

"Not a bit of it," and Will spoke indignantly. "Spencer's her fancy, or I don't know the signs. It looks like a case of jealousy with this fellow, Williamson."

"He needs looking after, Jack."

"I think so," replied Jack. "If Spencer is innocent, then the man who is working against him is our game."

They were surprised by a third knock at the door, and the reappearance of the irrepressible chambermaid.

"A lady wishes to see Mr. Frazer," she announced.

"Very well. Show her up."

"Haden't I best rotate?" demanded Jack, laughingly. "When ladies inquire so particularly for Mr. Frazer a chap of my size might be in the way."

"You can hang round the door long enough to see her," suggested Will, with kind permission. "I should like to have your critical opinion of my taste in ladies."

"I am a harsh critic," averred Jack. "Best turn me out if you wish to escape."

Before Will could reply the door opened, and his new visitor entered.

She was a lady some fifty years of age. She was very richly dressed in black silk, and had about her a striking dignity of manner. In face she had once been very beautiful, and was still a markedly handsome lady. Lines of sadness deeply channeled her face, showing principally about the mouth and the deep-set eyes.

Jack Bounce hastened to hand her a chair.

"Thanks," she replied with dignity of tone.

"Which of these gentlemen is Mr. Frazer?"

"I am he," Will responded.

"You wrote to Boston lately, inquiring about a Mrs. Milton?"

There was an intense feeling in her tone.

"I did," he replied.

"I am Mrs. Milton."

CHAPTER XIX.

AN ANIMATED BARREL.

Back again to Dick Darling I add the course of our "over true tale."

The parties who had felt so sure of finding him in the old house were obliged to swallow

their disappointment as best they could. They stood awhile talking of what they would have done if they had only found him, and debating as to how best to continue their search.

Then one of them went heavily up the stairs. The other two remained talking for a minute.

"Is he in it?"

"No," said Cap. Parker. "He is an agent in another business in which the old man is interested. Be careful with him."

"Of course I will," replied the other. "To-night then?"

"At what hour?"

"Midnight. Let us follow. He may suspect something. We will meet here at the time the ghosts walk."

With a laugh he led the way up the stairs, in response to the voice of Joe Turner, who called out:

"What is keeping you two? Going rattling are you? It ain't such a pleasant old cellar."

"Taking another look round, that is all," was the reply.

Their footsteps sounded loudly in the empty rooms above. They seemed to leave the house with reluctance, as if their search had not been complete.

Nor had it been, for light steps echoed their heavy ones, and boyish eyes peered curiously through one of the open windows after the departing men.

"Call round this way when you come back again," cried out Dick, mockingly. "If I ain't to home I'll tell the folks to treat you well—to hot water and pitchforks. Let's see, that's Cap and Bricktop, sure enough, who's t'other?"

A well-built chap, good looking, black mustache. Wonder if it ain't the critter that sent the express package?"

Dick's eyes continued to follow them, until they were out of sight from his point of view.

"Good-by. See you ag'in to-night," he said, with a courteous wave of the hand. "I won't go back on the pointment, if you don't."

As if thinking that he had had enough of the haunted house for one day, he made his way out.

"Must be supper time," he said; "stonishin' how soon a fellow gets hungry in these parts. Guess it's the country air. Didn't pick the back-bone of my dinner very clean. Wonder if they'd mind if I come back to finish the job."

Dick made his way to the fishing grounds, where he found the men through with their day's labor, and about partaking of their evening meal.

"I hope you put away the balance of my dinner," called out Dick to the old man who had been so friendly. "Come back to finish it."

"I've a notion you put it away yourself," and the old man gave a hearty laugh. "No matter, we'll give you a fish-bone to pick."

"Make it the back-bone then; there's better chance for polishin' on that."

"You were in the old house?"

"Guess I were."

"See or hear anything?"

They all looked up with interest for the answer.

"Nothin' but mouldy walls and rotten floors, dead carrots and cabbage in the cellar, and not the whisk of a mouse's tail about the house to skeer even a cat. It's just the biggest sell of a ghost's country spot I ever run across."

"Don't expect to see anything there by daylight," added another of the men. "Come at night, say about midnight, and see if there won't be enough to take the kinks out of your hair."

"All right. That'll save combin'. Mebbe I'll try it on. Like to see a first-class, prime, A No. 1 ghost. Bet I'd have him bottled up in lavender and powdered round for a curiosity. Were that the supper-bell I heered? Yes, I'll draw right up."

The rough fishermen were amused at Dick's free and easy manner, and at the fresh flavor of his remarks. They attempted to banter him a little at the supper table, but soon found that they had the wrong customer to deal with. Dick was more than a match for the whole party.

"Yes; they called," admitted Dick. "I treated them to my room. Set them out an air lunch. Hadn't time to stop round to do the honors."

"Are they the men you swam ashore from?" asked his friend.

"I must name. If I'd wanted their company, wouldn't emigrated them. Some folks take hints like they take pills—very hard to swallow. No, not all that. Just a trifle of the tail end, out under the middle," and Dick passed up his plate again.

"You're a pepper-pod of a chap," said his next neighbor, as he poured himself out a liberal allowance of whisky from a private bottle which he took from his pocket. "Have some?"

"Guess not. Much obliged."

"You'd best. There's nothing like it for washing down fish-bones."

"Never drunk nothin' stronger than water," avowed Dick. "Don't keer 'bout pourin' bottled lightning down my throat."

"That's right, my boy," exclaimed his old friend, approvingly. "Keep clear of it, and you'll make a man."

"Sooner drown myself in water than pickle my brains in whisky, any time," observed Dick. "I'm a Good Templar, I am. Solid, clear through, and calkulate to keep so."

The supper ended, as all suppers must, and Dick, after a general good-by to his new hosts, and a particular adieu to his old friend, took his departure in the direction of the neighboring town of Chester.

Here he spent a few hours around the streets, investigating the place, its advantages and disadvantages.

But a later hour of the night found him wending his way back toward the haunted house, whither he will precede him by a few minutes.

It was clear moonlight, and the scene around the haunted house had that peculiar luster which lacks the brightness of day, but dispels the gloom of night. The fields seemed bathed in silver, and a rich glow fell upon the rippling waters of the river.

Had any of the hard-worked fishermen but turned their eyes in that direction, they might have seen more than one ghostly figure advance toward the old house, and disappear within its portals. But the drowsy fishers had other business, in gathering strength for the next day's harvest through the medicine of sleep.

And if they had seen these gliding figures, the strong chance is they would have had pressing business in another direction.

The two figures which last slipped ghostlike into the old house seemed rather substantial for wandering graveyard sprites, and the tones of their voices had something decidedly human about them.

"Are the others in?" asked one, whose voice sounded decidedly like that of Captain Parker.

"Yes; a half-hour ago. They are at work by this time."

"No need to set the ghost-making machinery at work," declared Cap, with a laugh. "No investigators on hand to night."

"No. The last entertainment we got up for visitors was so alarming that no one has ventured to try it on since."

"If they only knew the joke we had on them! Well, let's in."

They were now in the cellar, into which the light of the moon dimly penetrated, leaving its recesses in deep shadow.

They moved on into the square offset already mentioned, within which they disappeared. There was heard a peculiar knocking, and the sound of low voices. Then a creak as of hinges, a quick flash of light, and all grew dim and still again.

But now a strange thing occurred, that might have alarmed even these ghost-makers, had they seen it. The inanimate things in the cellar seemed suddenly to have acquired the functions of life.

The old floor barrel, which had probably lain for years undisturbed and immovable in its corner, suddenly grew restive, and began to glide, with a slow motion and frequent intars of rest, across the cellar.

Its motion was between a hitch and a glide, but as silently made as befitting a decorous old floor barrel. This strange acrobatic feat continued until the whole length of the cellar was traversed, and the dark corner in its opposite extremity reached. Here it came to a rest, and settled down into its former immobility.

This seemed one of the freaks which nature sometimes takes upon herself when perfectly sure that no prying human eyes are about, to account scientifically for what is only one of the vagaries of the inanimate.

Whatever the cause the old barrel seemed perfectly satisfied with its success, and became again thoroughly docile and passive.

And the world moved on in its quiet way for near a half-hour, with not even a mouse to break its tranquillity.

Then came a new footstep on the floor above, and a cautious descent into the cellar below.

A substantial-looking specter moved quietly through the faint moonlight, and passed with a quick step into the darker alcove of the cellar, in full view of the ghostly old barrel.

There followed a peculiar system of signals, consisting of successive knocks upon what seemed a hollow portion of the wall, replied to by similar dull-sounding knocks, which seemed to come from within the wall.

A word was now spoken from within, answered by a password from the new comer.

A creaking sound followed, and the vitalized barrel belted with wooden wonder a portion of the stone wall, as it appeared, swing open, letting out a quick flash of light from some secret place within.

A faint and peculiar series of sounds were also audible, as the new comer passed quickly through the opening, and the wall closed and became firm and dark with all night's gloom again.

Something very like a chuckle came from the unseen lips in the comical old barrel, and it sprang into instant life, executing a sort of silent waltz, or what might have been a triumphant waltz, across the cellar toward its old location.

It reached there in less time than it had occupied in its former journey, and now, instead of settling down again into the restfulness which should be enjoined by law upon all empty old barrels, it very quietly tipped over, showing first the shoes on which it had executed this odd journey, then a pair of attenuated legs, and finally the body and head of what might have been the spirit of the barrel.

It was certainly its moving spirit, though incased in the mortal form of a sturdy boy. This individual at once restored his temporary habitation to its former position, and then began a very cautious movement toward the cellar stairs.

Keeping in every bit of gloom he could find he soon gained the bottom of the stairs, up which he went with a caution that no ghost could have surpassed. This noiseless motion was continued until the open air was reached.

The boy now circled very quietly around the house, as if in search of rays of light from some hidden windows.

He then crept with infinite caution through the open moonlight, putting the body of a tree between himself and the haunted house as quickly as possible.

Not until he reached the railroad ridge at a considerable distance from the deserted mansion did he pause.

Then a ringing laugh came from his lips which might have been heard as far as the old house by any ear sufficiently on the alert.

"If this ain't a night's work that's worth a leather medal, then sell me for a kingerab!" he ejaculated. "I've got them. They're just like a skeeter between my thumb and finger, and if I don't squeeze the song out of them, then there's no such thing as rats. Want Williamson to git in the trap first. Ain't satisfied with the mice while the rats' out. Bet I stonish Ned Hogan, and circumfusticate the two government chaps! Talk about your detectives—Dick Darling don't back down from the best of them. Oughter go back and tell the old shad-chatter that I've seen his ghosts; but guess it won't pay."

And with frequent bursts of laughter Dick made the best of his way toward Chester.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 383.)

Base-Ball.

BY HENRY CHADWICK

NOTES OF THE DAY.

A BASE murder was committed by a baseball player on July 26, during the playing of a game of ball at Fair Haven, Otsego County, N. Y. Two of the players of the contesting nines, named Wright and King, quarreled over the decision of the umpire, and in the heat of the war of words Wright struck King on the head with the bat he held in his hands, fracturing his skull and killing him. Wright was promptly arrested.

The Bostonians had to ride on the mail car from Louisville to Chicago, no passenger trains running. The strikers let the professionals go through as a matter of favor to such a class of strikers.

The Philadelphia Athletics had a close game with the Defiance nine of that city on the 25th, no less than fourteen innings' play marking the contest, the Athletics winning by 3 to 2 only.

The only players of their regular nine in the team were Reach, Fister, Shetzline and Coons. Shetzline put out twelve players. Field, late of the Auburns, caught for them, and Lomas pitched.

In the ten-inning game at Cincinnati, with the Brooklyn, on the 24th, Larkin made a three-base hit, which would have won the game, but in running round the bases on the hit he failed to touch second base, and he was given out. In the tenth inning Ferguson made a wild throw to start on Jones' hit, and Jones ran home on the error, thereby making the winning run. Harbidge played at second

base, Burdock being off the team for that day.

The Rochester Club returned home from their Eastern tour on July 25th. The record of their brief trip is as follows:

July 21, Rochester vs. Live Oak, at Lynn..... 10 2
" 23, Rochester vs. Live Oak, at Lynn..... 14 2
" 24, Lowell vs. Rochester, at Lowell..... 6 5

The Brooklyn nine, in their game with the champion city nine at Springfield, on July 23, defeated Mitchell's team by 10 to 0.

Ben Douglass, formerly secretary of the Hartford Base-Ball Club, is engaged in obtaining stock subscriptions to the amount of \$5,000, to be used in forming a corporation and securing a first class club for Hartford next season.

The project has received liberal encouragement, and such gentlemen as Frank Brown, C. E. Perkins, Mr. Bunce, S. R. McNary and others have taken stock. It is proposed to engage York, Higham, Carey and several others whose names have been long identified with the Hartford. In many respects it will be the old club under a new management. Morgan G. Buckeley, the present manager of the Hartford, will not, it is reported, have any connection with the new corporation in an official capacity, although his counsel and advice could not fail to be beneficial, and will no doubt be frequently asked. The Hartford's ball grounds will probably be leased by the new corporation.

Barnes, the famous second baseman of the old Boston nine, in a dispatch from his home to the Chicago Club managers, said: "I seldom leave the house now. I don't feel badly, but I grow weaker every day; nothing serious yet."

The League clubs from the West begin the games of their last tour East on



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Sunshine Papers.

Lovers and Husbands.

Oh! are they not nice—the men—when they are lovers? Cream puffs and caramels are not half so soft and sweet! Was there ever a woman on earth as charming as yourself, then? No, indeed; I guess not! Did any one else ever wear such a pretty dress or arrange their hair so becomingly? Did any other woman select such bewitching bonnets and have such darling little curls? Never! You had best not suggest such a possibility, unless you wish to be smothered, and choked, and squeezed, dreadfully. A lover thinks no woman ever dressed or looked so divinely as his own particular Angelina. Lovers are so appreciative!

But husbands! Bah! It makes one tingle all over, especially temptingly in the fingers, to think how provoking they are when you dress up your nicest to please them, and expect to be told how sweet you look, and they never notice but that you have on your old torn wrapper, and are as ugly as Macbeth's witches; but sit at the table regaling you with a description of such a pretty girl that rode up with them in the car, or their partner's beautiful wife. And they never can see why you did not buy a dress like Mrs. J.'s and arrange your hair like Miss C.'s, and when you bring home your new spring bonnet, they apostrophize their cigars and wonder why a woman never knows how to select a pretty bonnet; and let them see you heating a slate-pencil, to curl your hair upon, and what a row they raise! Great Cesar! They guess they aren't going to have their wife burning off all her front hair. You vainly offer convincing proof that you do not injure it, and plead that you cannot curl it on paper since they object to having curl-papers poking about their bed at night. Very well! You need not crimp your hair at all! It is an abominable custom, and they always detested crimps—on you especially!

Oh! ye gods and little fishes! Is it not odd how it changes a man to hear himself called "husband"?

When a man is your lover he never can trot you around enough. He makes appointments with you at the picture-galleries, and spends whole afternoons studying engravings and paintings. He takes you to the Academy of Design, Museum of Art, and the menagerie; he walks with you around the parks, and drives with you along the famous roads; he takes you to the theater, the museum, the aquarium, the minstrels, the circus, the opera; he doeses you with tragedies, comedies, burlesques, and sermons; and patronizes rehearsals, concerts, societies, and balls. But when he has paid the minister a nice little fee for pronouncing you Mrs. —, what a different creature develops itself to you in your husband! Bless your dear little soul! you are lucky if you get to the theater once a year, and to hear an opera during the remainder of your natural life! He never can get away from business until after dark; you must be crazy to think he can waste his time idling in picture-galleries; and he is sure the last art collection doesn't amount to a row of pins; he cannot see why you should care to go. He doesn't approve of the

minstrels or the circus, and he never has time to walk, and the carriage is too crowded with two on a seat; you had better stay home and look after the baby. He should not think a true mother would ever want to leave her child to another's care.

Oh! you great humbugs of selfishness, you husbands! Who would ever believe that our meek, slavish, sweet, doting lovers could turn into such inconsiderate, tyrannical, cross old fellows.

He is a lover, now, so he wants your hands to be as white as snow. Do you suppose he is ever going to let you soil them? No, not he! What if you do not know how to cook? He would not allow you to do so, anyway; he intends you should always have some one to do that for you—oh, of course, the naughty, deceitful wretch! But, just wait awhile! Then he will not care whether your hands are white or not; but he will insist that you make your pies yourself, and superintend the roasting of the game. And no matter how hard you try to have them marveled of culinary success, he will always tell you of some one who can do so much better.

Wouldn't we like to shake a few of you aggravating husbands, occasionally! And we would, too, if it were not for wanting to coax money out of you for a new silk!

A PARSON'S DAUGHTER.

AN UNNEIGHBORLY NEIGHBOR.

WHEN I was a little girl I used to think, if any one had their trials on earth that individual was myself. The greatest of all my trials came in the shape of an ancient maiden called "Miss Amy." I hadn't a very amiable disposition at that time, and it seemed all the hate in my body was vented on that female. I hated to go to her house, hated to have her come to ours, and hated to meet her in the street or see her at church. She was exceedingly poor and dependent on the charity of her neighbors, and this charity was freely bestowed, because people knew that Miss Amy "had seen better days." They were willing to put up with her unenviable address—so was I, and if it had been only address she was possessed of I wouldn't have minded it one bit because I was old myself, but it wasn't all; she possessed the sin of ingratitude, and with all my faults I was always grateful. She wasn't, and that's one reason why I hated her.

I hated to go to her house with any delicacy, for she would always lift the cover from the meat or fish and smell of the food to see if it was fresh. As if mother would have sent her anything tainted! Sometimes she would turn up her nose at the food and say she "wasn't a pig and couldn't eat swill." Once she sent the whole tray of things back to mother because no pie had been thought of, and "she wished people to understand, if she was poor, she would have pie with her dinner. It was what she had been used to, and she must have it."

I hated to have her come to the house, for she would roundly abuse all those who had done what they could for her. Mind you, she seemed to consider it a duty every one owed to her to help her all they could. She was once telling mother how the grocer had sent her some flour and tea and complained because he did not add some sugar to the present, and accordingly he was "the meanest man in the world," and she "hated the very sight of him." Mother, in the pleasant, gentle way she had, said she had always liked Mr. D., the grocer, and that I was always praising his liberality. "Likely enough!" exclaimed Miss Amy. "No wonder Eve likes him, for he's just such another impudent heathen as Eve is herself." I was mad, and I may have said what I ought not to, but I did burst out with—"Well, I'm not such a heathen as to snap at the hand that feeds me. I'd be grateful for what was done for me." That angered Miss Amy and she flounced out of the house, saying she didn't come to be insulted by such a minx as I was.

She never called again and I was glad. Mother scolded me and said I was wrong; and perhaps I was, but I didn't think so then. I had a habit of speaking my mind very plainly when I was a child—and I haven't outgrown that habit yet!

I hated to meet her in the street for she would be sure to say something disagreeable and give me unneeded advice. According to her ideas I never went out for exercise but I was romping; never went out for a walk but I wanted to show off my finery; she'd always tell me to be sure and carry home the right change—as though I'd be thief enough to keep it.

I hated to see her at church, for I always felt as though her argus eye was on me, commenting on my actions and that, if she went to Heaven before I did, she would tell the Lord I ate peppermint drops or coughed, in church, hoping to have the Lord close the door against me. I wonder I didn't think the Lord would know all this before then, but I didn't. I knew if she could find anything to blame me for she'd be sure to tell the clergyman and he would mention it in Sunday school before all my young companions. I felt that, no matter where she went, she would make mischief and she might make herself so disagreeable in Heaven that the Lord would send her back to earth.

And when I saw her lying in her coffin I shed no tears. I was not a hypocrite to feel sorry. To me it was a relief to have her gone. Remember, that this was when I was a little child and I could not help my feelings. No doubt she had good traits to balance the evil ones. Disappointment may have soured her once amiable disposition, and poverty have caused her to think and act as she did. But it seems to me, if I were to live to be as old and as dependent on others as she was, I would do more to deserve the kindness I needed and be more grateful for what was done for me.

The feeling I had for this woman were those of a child and, sometimes, when I think of her now the old impressions will come back to me and I wonder why the memory of her can not be as pleasant to me as of a sister or one just as old and just as dependent as she was, and of whom I will tell you some time and let you see the contrast.

EVE LAWLESS.

In a government like ours each individual must think of the welfare of the state, as well as of the welfare of his own family, and therefore of the children of others as well as his own. It becomes, then, a momentous question whether the children in our schools are educated in reference to themselves and their private interests only, or with a regard to the great social duties and prerogatives that await them in after life. Are they so educated that when they grow up they will make better Christians, or only grander savages! For, however lofty the intellect of man may have been gifted, how skillfully it may have been trained, if it be not guided by a sense of justice, a love of mankind, and a devotion to duty, its possessor is only a more splendid, as he is a more dangerous barbarian.

Foolscap Papers.

My Castle in Spain.

I HAVE a castle in Spain to which I very often go. Railroad and steamship fares, smacked so much of hard-labor-earned money that it seems too earthy tostop to pay it, and I won't travel nowadays by any more commonplace conveyance than imagination. This is one of the lines upon which the hands do not strike and tear up the road and delay the trains. I have always found it more prompt. I always get there sooner. The employees are more kind. I am not waked at every station for my ticket when I do not wish to get off there. There are no smash-ups whereby a man's widow can recover the exact damage for her bereavement (\$8,000, to a cent, with her lawyers to pay before she is fully satisfied, and thanks to the railroad delightfully in a card.)

I travel a great deal in imagination over the sea. I do not get seasick. The constantly recurring horizons with nothing on them but my eyes, do not grow monotonous. I am in no danger of climbing into the rigging and being tied there for my curiosity; besides, I am not confined to the steerage. I travel in the finest of vessels. The captain is under my pay and delights to honor me, and the sailors struggle to black my boots.

So when I get tired of this country I put a card marked "Not in" on my front door, lock it and retire to my little room from whence I spread the sails of my imagination and visit my castle in Spain. I don't lock my door for fear of dums. I am rich and they never disturb me. But, you know—a tailor, or a grocer, or a shoemaker, or a wash-woman, might make a mistake and rattle the wrong door with their usual impudence, so I am not obliged to go down and tell them, I'll settle—I mean to say, I don't have to send them to the next door.

My castle in Spain is built on more magnificent proportions than any of my neighbors'. It completely overshadows theirs. They are so envious of it that they try to prevent its shadow from falling on their domains, and work to shovel the shadow over the fence.

The building is all paid for, and there are no mechanic's liens on it by way of ornamentation. The structure is high and airy—I may say it is exceedingly airy, and I spend many very agreeable afternoons in it. It has all the modern improvements, making a very desirable piece of unreal estate. In it I feel younger than I ever did in my life, and I don't go around with pocketfuls of rheumatism, nor jaw my wife to ease a toothache.

My castle was built under my own supervision, and everything is in order. In the giant cellars are vaults built expressly to hold my treasures, where I go to whenever I wish to pay off any bills, or upon which I give drafts to my creditors, and never bother myself any more about it. (It is with checks upon my treasure there that I do my principal business. I could bring home stacks of money whenever I come if I desired, but I have no use for it here, having wealth which is worth one hundred cents on the dollar, any day.)

Here I'm saddest when I sing, and so is everybody else who hears me, but there my voice rings out as joyfully as a maiden's who has just accepted a lover and gone into the gumdrop business, and I feel like I was a boy—I feel like I was two boys for that matter. The quarter-day, when my salary is due, never comes to aggravate me to death and fire me out to walk all the way down to the bank to draw it, and then have the trouble of carrying it all the way back with me; and my notes never fall due, thereby worrying me to death to begin early in the morning, as I always do on such days, to run around and hunt up the man I owe, and then, after I have chased him all day and found him at last, I have to use all the persuasive eloquence for which I am celebrated, to get him to take it. I fear that paying debts will get to be distasteful to me yet before I take up my permanent abode in the castle in Spain, though I pray not.

When I am there people don't importune me to death to go out and dine with them, and thus make me miserable, because there my meals are served up regularly and also eaten up regularly. I'm getting fat.

Then, when the nap wears off my suit of clothes, it grows on again, and the stuff is good that I wear; it doesn't get snagged if I run across a little piece of wind; the buttons don't shake off, and the button-holes don't pull out and get lost.

When walking proudly up and down those long, stately corridors, with many a marble floor and gilded ceiling, and the air is sweet with the perfume of flowers transparent, seen in low sunshine warm, I am never troubled with my corns—I am never troubled with my corns. The tall towers and minarets are lost in the Hayes movement. The atmosphere is full of air. The water from murmuring fountains is wet. The audible songs of feathered birds I hear. There are alabaster stairs, down which it would be delicious to fall. Murmuring mermaids sport in the cascades. The softening influence of romance lays its spell upon my soul. The soft airs seem blowing from Eden; and had I but pen and ink I feel soft enough to melt away into transcendent poetry at ten cents a line, if I had a market for it, and the editor was good-natured.

Oh, my castle in Spain! Money could never purchase it from me. I wish it could. If I could only rent out the upper stories of it! But what do I want with money?

I wish I was only a permanent resident. Life is not life here. A man can't go up-street but what he meets somebody whom he—don't admire. Here we put our hands into our purse and find no mo—more money than we want. Here people have the audacity to charge for everything you buy—if you ask them to, kindly. Here maidens deceive and paper collars have linen only on one side.

I have been over in my castle all this afternoon, and have had a good time. There was no useless hammering on the doors there; all was peace. I have just returned by the same route I went, to hear some one hammering on my more matter-of-fact door below.

It must be some foreign nobleman or other dignitary who does not quite understand our modes of knocking. But I shall not go down. I shall not disappoint him, but let him knock. I think it would do me no good to go down—nor him. I am rich, and just back from my Castle in Spain, and I can afford to stay up here.

Sublimely Yours,

WASHINGTON WHITEHORN.

Love is won by love, or not at all. There is no money or price that a true heart knows. Its exchanges are not low equivalents. They are gifts, or they are nothing. They are unalloyed attachments of love to love, of heroism to heroism, of enthusiasm to enthusiasm. Love is a celestial attachment of souls.

Topics of the Time.

—There were only 693 quarter sections of land located in Manitoba in 1876, while 1,000 quarter sections were located in five months of 1877. This far Northern region is destined to have a large population.

—There is an urgent demand for women in the Black Hills. A newspaper out there says that 1,000 women could find good husbands inside of a few hours. We hope there won't be a panic, though, among the girls.

—The Turks allow no infidel to look at the standard of Mahomet, and when it was carried in a procession, about 1768, several hundred Christians, who ignorantly looked on, were massacred by the Turkish populace.

—Walking a thousand miles in a thousand hours having been repeatedly done in England, is looked upon as slow. A pedestrian named Gale now proposes to walk four thousand quarters of a mile in four thousand consecutive periods of ten minutes each.

—Russia has in the last six months exported wheat to the value of over \$13,000,000, against wheat to the value of \$8,000,000 for the corresponding period of last year. So, in spite of the war she has food enough to feed her own people and a handsome surplus for outside nations.

—The Archaeological Society of Athens has been making arrangements for the purchase of the villagers' houses now standing within the walls of the great temple at Eleusis. If the arrangements prove satisfactory, excavations on a large scale will probably be begun next season.

—The sect of the Pilgrers receives constant accessions to its numbers in Siberia. The Pilgrers cut themselves loose from all family ties, change their names, and either live in the forests or tramp from village to village. They hold it no sin to kill the members of other religious sects.

—A recent history of American uniforms brings to light the fact that the gray of the Southern Confederacy was the regulation dress of the American armies which fought at Chipewaga and Niagara in 1812, and was adopted at West Point in commemoration of those victories. It is still quite extensively worn by Northern regiments, and is the prevailing color in all military schools; and for economy and quietness it is doubtless preferable to the blue. Miss Bartie Le Franc lately walked fifty miles in eleven hours and eight minutes, at New London, Connecticut. She limped slightly at the close, and her pulse ran up to ninety-eight. During the evening the janitor turned off the gas because the rent of the hall had not been paid in advance, but the lady walked on in the dark. Her admirers called for candles, and, brandishing them above their heads, cheered her as she walked. When she had finished her last miles she made a little speech, and on the next day she got up very early and went to church. Women walkers are now the sensation.

—A medical restaurant has been lately established in London, on the principle that diseases can generally be cured by a special system of diet, and that they are caused chiefly by improper food. On the entrance of a visitor a physician asks him regarding his ailments. His name is then prescribed, and he is allowed to eat no more than is presented to him. At the close he is dismissed to smoke a medicated cigar and to sip coffee, chamomile tea, or whatever other beverage may be considered advisable.

—The residents of Fort Edward, N. Y., honor James McCrea's memory on the centennial of her massacre (July 27th). The church bells were rung at daybreak, business was suspended, there was a long procession and longer oration, and toward dusk there was a firemen's tournament. Not one of the young ladies of the place was inside; the ladies declared that it was difficult to celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Jane with any degree of appropriateness. In the lot overlooking the spring where the fair-haired lassie was murdered, there was an arch of evergreens and flowers bearing her name. That was better than playing away at the machine.

—In the "Memoirs of St. Simon" it is to be found the following regarding the way the women of Paris dressed their heads in the year 1718: "At the commencement of the new year the Duke and Duchess of Shrewsbury arrived from London. The Duchess declared the women's head-dresses ridiculous, as, indeed, they were. They were edifices of brass wire, ribbons, hair, and all sorts of tawdry rubbish, more than two feet high, making women's heads seen in the middle of their bodies. If they moved ever so slightly the edifice trembled, and the inconvenience was extreme. The King Louis XIV. could not endure them, but, master as he was of everything, was unable to banish them. They lasted ten years and more, despite all he could do and say."

—Cardinal Manning, writing to a friend in Dublin on intemperance, says: "Half the misery of homes arising from bad temper, sloth, squandering, selfishness, debt, neglect of all duty, is caused by indulgence in wine and the like. The sure and best cure of this is to bring up children in simple habits, and to guard them from the evil influence of the wine and spirits. When a liking for the taste is acquired, the temptation is at once in existence. Common sense as well as faith says: Train up children not to know the taste, and they will not be tempted. I urge this on parents whenever I can, and I have before me many happy homes in which children have grown up without so much as having ever tasted anything but water." The cardinal's head, as they say out west, is level. Would that parents everywhere could apply the moral of his discourse!

—The English may be very refined people and all that, but they are certainly far behind this country in the matter of schools and school training, for they still fling the students brutally, even in their best preparatory schools. The case of poor little Gibbs, of Christ's Hospital, in London (Charles Lamb's School) is an illustration of the treatment administered to boys. After two or three months of schooling the lad ran away because he could not endure the treatment which he received at the hands of one of the monitors. He declared that he would never remain under the monitor as long as he lived. He would rather hang himself. He was, however, sent back to school, where he was birched. After three weeks he ran away again, and was again taken back to school. He was sent to the infirmary to await the decision of the Head Master on his case, and in the infirmary he hanged himself with a cord attached to a ventilator. Some of the evidence as to the condition of the school goes to show that bullying and severe flogging have been too common there. Poor little Gibbs seems to have been fairly fagged into suicide.

—President Hayes is reported to have said, the other day, that Indians could not be introduced in the army, in any extended way, with impunity. He added: "I had three Indians in my corps. As scouts they were unequalled. We could do nothing with them as soldiers. They would not drill, they would not keep rank, they would do nothing except in their wild Indian way. We were troubled by a sharp-shooter who had picked off our men, and we could not reach him. I sent for one of these scouts. He came to my camp in a slouch way, seemed half asleep, and was wholly indifferent. When I told him what I wanted, his face glowed, his eyes sparkled and he straightened himself up like a crested snake ready to strike, rolled his trousers up to his thighs, his sleeves to his shoulder-blades—to be as much of a savage as possible. He took his rifle, several rounds of ammunition, threw himself on the grass before there was any need of it, and wound himself along with the velocity and silence of a snake. Three shots brought the sharp-shooter down, when the scout returned perfectly exhilarated.

Readers and Contributors.

Accepted: "Changed," "A Case for a Fort," "The Bell at Eye," "Listening to the Riples," "Little Miss Storms," "The New Way," "A Choice of Eyes," "Willie Come To-night," "Declined," "Ivan," "A Queen's Mistake," "The Old Guard," "Major Peason's Last Pipe," "A Girl's Revenge," "The Union School Rebellion," "Mose Anderson's Yarn."

RECEIVED MERIDITH, Answer next week.
 P. L. P. Write to D. Van Nostrand & Co., publishers, New York, for their catalogue.

Geo. A. E. Have returned MS. by express. Charges to be returned us, fifty cents.

SANDY. You did right in not bowing. A well-bred man knows that it is *her* place to make the first recognition on the street.

ELWOOD. Poem quite good, but marred by imperfect rhythm. Try again. And—look to your rhyme. *Sun* does not rhyme with *own*.

H. L. E. Why not call upon the gentleman and ask an explanation? An interview, preferable to correspondence, especially in your case.

W. F. W. Your MS., as such, is quite correct. The sketch, as announced, has been declined. It is somewhat crude, and the incident trite.

BRUMMER. Can't give the recipe you ask for. May give it hereafter. Have no story in hand by the author named. His "Fire Fiend" was given as No. 5 of the *New York Library*.

N. G. C. Injury probably not serious. The fact that you can use the limb as you indicate shows that nothing is "broken." Keep it still; don't be tempted to its further use for awhile. Base-ball is a rough game, and the incident trite.

W. J. The paste used by binders is thus made: take 1½ lbs. of flour and mix with cold water; stir all lumps out, then add one handful of alum and a tea-spoonful of salt; mix thoroughly. A little carbolic acid afterward stirred in will prevent souring for several days.

MAIME M. Papers sent. See No. 388 for answer. Do not, as a general thing, care to answer by mail. To anticipate and overdo is one of the best of your wishes would certainly adopt your friend's suggestion. Ladies have far more rights than they usually exercise, and the knowledge of their rights and dignity of temper should make the relations very congenial.

W. S. C. For proper pronunciation of the names see "Webster's Unabridged Dictionary." "Wood's Natural History" is one of the best on birds, reptiles, etc. There are about thirty species of poisonous snakes in the United States. Can't spare space to mention them all, but the most common is the rattlesnake. There are laws in nearly all the States prohibiting work on Sunday.—Other answers in our next.

CONSTANT READER, Syracuse. The calling of a surveyor is a very good one in all States where new lands are in market, new roads to lay, town lots to locate, etc. If you could attend a course in Cornell or the New York School of Mining and Engineering, it would greatly advance you. Write to the curators of these schools, or of the Stevens Institute, Hoboken, or the Troy, N. Y., Polytechnic School, for catalogue, course of study, etc.

CONSTANT READER, Binghamton. A plain and somewhat heavy gold ring is the proper marriage ring, because that kind of ring stands the test of wear and tear. The engagement ring may be plain or with set, and marked with betrothal initials on inside; the plain ring will cost about four dollars, and the other from five to fifteen dollars, or more, as means permit. Wear engagement ring on the third finger of left hand; wear wedding ring on the third finger of left hand.

DANDY. Monograms and initials are much less used by stylish people upon their note and letter paper than heretofore. Initials have the preference, they are large, and in script, and stamped in gilt or a combination of gilt and gray color on the residence, street and number, or town, in gilt or colored script at the top of the paper is a style of adornment adopted by the most successful men of business. Initials and monograms upon wedding cards and invitations are not as stylish as perfectly plain envelopes.

M. D. R. asks: "Are burnt matches bad for the eyebrows? I sulphate of zinc good for granulated eyelids? Is Lucie a homely name, and what is its meaning? Yes, burnt matches are bad. If you desire to darken your brows and lashes, try or make a paste of walnut juice and oil, and keep upon your toilet-table. With the aid of a small brush you can darken the brows and lashes prettily.—Consult a physician as to granulated eyelids.—Lucie is a very pretty name, and the French form of Lucie means "light."

CONSTANT READER, Providence. Because you are "college bred" is no reason why you should abandon your trade. If our mechanics were generally ambitious to obtain a good education, and to associate real scholarship with their occupations, it would greatly enhance both their influence and usefulness. Edith Burrill, "The Ladies' Blacksmith," is a case in point. All apprentices ought to serve long enough to learn their trade thoroughly, in all its branches. Very few trades indeed can be learned in a year. The average time required for carpenters, printers, machinists, upholsterers, cabinet-makers, wagon-makers, tanners, etc., etc.

Two CLERKS write: "We are sisters who have saved up about three hundred dollars each; we clerk in our uncle's store, and we have a room where we spend our evenings and see considerable company, want us to come and stay with her; we prefer, over so much, to be independent, however, and ask your ideas about it." We consider you very fortunate young ladies; that you have good positions, have been able to put aside a portion of your salaries toward future contingencies, and enjoy society, is exceptionally good. We would advise you, however, to preserve your independence as long as you can. Continue to prove to your aunt that you appreciate her kindness, and, thankfully avail yourselves of her chaperone in regard to the people with whom you associate; but express your wish to be independent, as you are, and give her and her friends your evenings and an occasional day or week when you can be spared from the store.

EM E. writes: "A cousin of mine, a clerk in a bank, is going to 'tamp it' as he calls it, through the Catskills. He wants me to go for the time, and like to ever so much. Do you see any impropriety in my going, and what kind of a suit would be best for such a walk? I have a very good friend of the dear JOURNAL. If you are a young lady of enough spirit to undertake such a walk, we see no reason why you should refuse your cousin's kind invitation. He is a very good fellow, and you both much good, and afford you more enjoyment than two weeks of conventional idleness. Have a suit of flannel or light-colored material, lined with white, or gray trimmed with scarlet, are the most serviceable colors. The upper part of the skirt should be made perfectly plain in front, and as scant as looks well, and the bottom of it should be sewn, with a cord, a *kill-plait* half a yard deep. Above the *kill-plait* sew a row, or more, of the red or scarlet trimming. The overskirt is worn, and the skirt should be entirely clear the ground all around. The waist should be a creton jacket, not too tightly fitted. Wear plain linen collars and cuffs, and no ornaments. Your hat should shade your face sufficiently for you to dispense with a sunshade. Arrange your hair as neatly and compactly as possible—either in a French twist with a comb, or in a braid down the back. Wear long-wristed lisle-thread gloves, dark hose, and substantial, easy boots. A pair of *Joanav* gaiters to match the hose, and most carefully necessity of donning more than one short Balmoral skirt with the dress-skirt.

E. M. writes: "Is there any way in which a young lady who enjoys fairly good health can improve her complexion? I am a teacher, and rarely over sick, am young and nice-looking, only my complexion is not as clear and fair as I would like. What diet would purify and yet enrich the blood? If you are troubled with eruptions or pimples, procure an ounce of English glycerine, half an ounce of rosemary and twenty drops of carbolic acid. This is excellent used upon the face night and morning. For refining the skin cold water applications are excellent. Make a mask of cotton-bating and every night, after retiring, wring it out in soft, pure cold water, and place it upon the face for the night. If persevered in for three or four weeks this process is said to render the skin as fair, soft and pure as an infant's. Take food that is rich in water baths, and plenty of active exercise in the open air, and use of all greasy foods and pastries. To keep blood pure and rich use grain food—oatmeal, grits, cracked corn, rice, hominy, Indian meal, Graham flour, etc., and pure milk. Use all the fruit you care for, especially seed fruit, and all fresh vegetables that are not soaked with fatty or salt meats. Rare broiled steaks, and most carefully broiled meats are good, also soups and broth made from beef-extract. Avoid cake, pastry, and rich puddings; use fruit, or light desserts, such as cornstarch, farina, etc. Ale, beer and claret, used in moderation, are good; but coffee and tea should be tabooed. Never make the mistake of eating when you are not hungry; take your food at regular hours, and only as much as will satisfy your hunger."

Unanswered questions on hand will appear next week.

THE KNIGHT.

BY CORINNE CUSHMAN.

Low in the valley lies the blue stream,
Clouds floating over like thoughts in a dream;
High on the hillside gleams the gray wall—
Rises the tower of the rude baron's hall.

Low in the valley the road glitters white—
Over it languidly rides a young knight;
High is the window of Eleanor's tower—
Narrow and high in the grim old tower.

Low to the valley her sweet eyes are bent;
Blushes and smiles on her fair face are blent.
High to the tower his eager eyes turn—
See on the gray stones her golden curls burn.

Low beat his heart and his face was pale;
When, wounded and weary, he reached the vale;
High b at his heart and his cheek grew flushed;
When the fair girl-face in the window blushed.

Low in the valley the clear stream ran,
Like thoughts of love in the heart of man;
High in the blue heaven the gray birds sang,
When the hoofs of his horse on the drawbridge rung.

Low shone the moon, with furtive light,
When over the bridge returned the knight;
High the rude baron had cursed his guest,
For daring to speak of the hope in his breast.

Low shone the moon on Eleanor's face—
Fast the knight held her in safe embrace;
High from her lattice a silk ladder swings,
And away through the valley a hoof-beat rings.

Her Wrong-Doing.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

ALMA LEITH had never endured such a terrible temptation in all her life as the one which was holding her in its grip of steel now, as she stood at the window, with a letter in her cold trembling hand that the postman had just handed her—a letter addressed to her cousin Grace Granger, who had lived with the Leiths for years, and addressed in Ray Mordaunt's hand-writing, the one man in all the world whom she loved.

It was a sweet April morning, and the fresh warm breath of spring stole in through the open window; the sun was sending down floods of golden blue radiance; there was the music of early song birds, and a delicate subtle fragrance of smelling buds and spring blossoms, and fresh earth.

And yet, in the midst of all this perfection and ecstasy of Nature, Alma Leith stood there, fairly shivering with real physical and mental torments as she read over and over again the handsome, bold prescription Ray Mordaunt had written to Grace Granger.

"What can he be wanting of her to write to her? Can it be possible that I have mistaken everything, and that he cares for her?"

Alma's face grew colorless and her hand shook perceptibly—the hand that held the letter over which her whole heart and soul was in uproar.

She thought of Grace's beauty, the creamy skin, the purple black hair worn as royally as a duchess wears her coronet, the lovely soul eyes of lustrous darkness, the exquisite mouth that was red as a cleft cherry.

Then she involuntarily glanced in the mirror between the windows and saw her own reflection that she mentally described as characterless and colorless and unattractive, and a bitter, despairing look came over her face.

"Of course I have been mistaken—of course he loves her! How could he help it, or any man help loving her? Why should I expect any one, least of all such a god as Ray Mordaunt to care for me? And yet there have been times when I did think—"

It had happened that been spoken words there would have been the most pitiful bitterness of tone in them; as it was, her eyes had in their liquid gray depths shadows of intensest pain and desperation.

Still she turned the letter over and over, the fascination horribly strong upon her to open it and know for a positive surety, whether or not Ray Mordaunt was seeking to woo another love while she was bestowing her own upon him.

"If I thought he had told her in this letter he loved her! If I thought so—and why should he be writing to her if not to tell her so? Then a guilty flush came over her cheeks, and a scared look into her eyes, as she deliberately thrust the letter in a yawning crack between the old-fashioned mantel-piece and the wall—a huge wide crack that had been her and cousin Grace's delight in childhood days, into which many a nuisance had found its way. Then she sat down with her sewing, her cheeks gradually losing their heated flush, her hand resuming its customary steady hold.

"People have done meaner things, and everything is fair in love! Other girls would have gratified their low curiosity and read the letter, but I would not do that!"

And so she saved her conscience, and had become quite used to the mean act she had done by the time Grace Granger came back from her morning walk, so graceful, so beautiful, so charming.

Forty-eight hours later, and Grace herself tells Alma news that strikes home to the girl's heart like steel blades.

"You will be so glad and sorry at what I have to tell you, dear. Glad—aren't you? Because I am so happy, oh, so happy, Alma! Ross Cecil has asked me to be his wife! Only think, I will be Ross Cecil's wife! But you will be grieved to learn that our dear old friend Ray Mordaunt has left the village. He went very unexpectedly last night without a word of good-bye to any one but Ross. He left his remembrances for us. Alma! child! you are not feeling so sorry as that?" For Alma had started up in her chair, pale as ashes.

"Gone—away! oh, oh, Grace!" And by that moaning complaint Grace knew Alma's secret, and yet, for all the loving sympathy and tender consolation that she gave the stricken girl, Alma never dared confess the act of which she had been guilty.

It would have done no good, she told herself, again and again, "for Grace loved Mr. Cecil. But how dearly Ray must have loved her, to have gone away from the sight of her happiness!"

And the weeks and months rolled on, and two years had brought the quiet happiness of wedded life to Grace Cecil—years that were full-fraught with memories of pain to foolish, guilty, wretched little Alma.

Mrs. Cecil was sitting in her nursery, rocking her young babe to sleep, when the maid-of-all-work tapped on the door, as a sort of preliminary to her entrance, and handed her mistress a letter.

"Mrs. Leith sent it over, ma'am, by the coachman's boy, with the message that the maids found it when they were tearing down the wall to put in the marble mantel; and she says to tell you they've had a letter from Boston, and Miss Alma is well and sends her love to you."

So the fated letter that Alma Leith had hidden in the crack by the old wooden mantel-

piece came into its rightful possession after so many long weary days, and Grace read it as she rocked her baby on her breast.

"My dear friend Grace," it said, "I think you will hardly accuse me of being faint-hearted when I come to you to help me plead my cause with your cousin Alma, whom I love and desire to make my wife. But she is so coquettish, and I am so plain a man, all unused to understand the ways that please women, that there are times when I fear I may never be able to tell her all I mean. Yet, were this the only reason, I think I would surmount it. But I have been told that her affections are already engaged; if so, I shall never offer mine. Be kind, friend Grace, and tell me if I have a chance with my darling. I shall anxiously look for the answer to this; if none comes, I shall not only know there is no hope for me, but that you regard me presumptuous in having ventured to plead your kindness."

"Yours very truly,
"RAY MORDAUNT."

Mrs. Cecil read the letter with absorbing interest, the color coming and going on her cheeks.

What a pity this has been mislaid—what a pity! There is no use speculating how it got in the big crack I remember so well. Some of the rogish Leith boys have, of course, done it for a joke. But what a pity it is! What misery it has made; for Alma loved him—I know she did!"

That night, at dinner, she told her husband all about it, and asked him what she should do. "I should send it to Ray Mordaunt with the explanation," he said promptly. "If he has suffered no change in his feelings, he will yet be happy with Alma. If he is married or his affections have been given to any one else, no one but himself need know of the peculiar occurrence. Send it to him, Grace, with one of your own especially nice letters—such as I know you can write."

Mrs. Cecil laughed.

"Will you never cease such delicious little compliments, Ross? And Alma—should she be written to as well?"

Mr. Cecil was most promptly emphatic.

"Certainly not, Grace. Let her never know of it unless Mordaunt himself tells her. Why need she know how near her happiness has been to her unless her lover will offer it again?"

So, all unconscious that Alma Leith had been the guilty cause of her own postponement, perhaps forever lost—happiness, Grace Cecil sat down to her desk and wrote to Ray Mordaunt, telling him the mysterious fate of the letter he had written, and giving him Alma's address, with her friend's she was visiting in Boston—telling him, in the delicate way her husband in no manner over-estimated, that if he still entertained the same feelings as when he wrote her she ventured to assure him he would not have to plead in vain with the woman who Grace thought had cared for him.

Mrs. Storey's reception rooms were delightfully filled that evening with the elite of Boston society, and among all the brilliant assemblage Alma Leith was without a peer for loveliness and grace and cultured dignity.

She had changed since that day over two years ago when, in yielding to a mean impulse, she had unwittingly destroyed the happiness that awaited her so nearly. She had never forgiven herself for the treachery of which her jealousy had made her guilty, although she knew that even the cruel wickedness of her act, had not been the cause of severing any ties between Grace Granger and Mr. Mordaunt.

But the effect both of her conscience and her unrequited affection for Ray Mordaunt were more noticeable to one who knew her intimately well. She was so much more subdued, more quiet, more gentle. The appellation of coquette, which she had won in earlier days, and which Mr. Mordaunt had so justly applied to her, would have been entirely unmerited now, so gravely reserved had she become.

It suited her admirably—this new, tenderly sweet, half pathetic way she had, and more than one lover had offered himself in vain to her—in vain, because she had never, for one moment, loved another than Ray Mordaunt.

To-night, at Mrs. Storey's reception, Alma was looking unusually lovely. She had dressed herself in a light, lovely shade of apple-green tulle, ornamented with gracefully disposed tender pink-peach blossoms. Her white wrists and throat were circled by foamy tulle ruffles; and there were peach-blossoms in her dark-brown hair.

"You never looked so fair, Alma," her cousin Gussie said, in an impulsive burst of admiration. "And I am unusually glad, for there will be an opportunity to show off my pretty Western cousin to very aristocratic guests to-night. Mrs. Storey told Lillian that Mr. Mordaunt and his wife, from Philadelphia, would be there—the Mordaunts and Storeys are great friends, I believe."

And Alma listened, with great waves of cold, thrilling pain surging over her. Mordaunt! Of course it must be Ray Mordaunt—and his wife! Could she bear to see him—and his wife? Or would she act like a silly fool and let him know how his marriage had hurt her?

But she went bravely, almost recklessly, to Mrs. Storey's house that night. She danced, and promenaded, and played and sung, and was, as usual, chief among the chiefest, and more than even usually handsome, with her flushed cheeks, her apple-green floating dress, her peach-blossoms ornaments—waiting every moment to meet him face to face.

And Ray Mordaunt, standing in the archway between the curtains that draped off the conservatory, watched her with a smile on his handsome mouth, and an intense light in his eyes. And then, when for one moment she stood entirely alone in a retired spot, he walked over to her.

"Miss Leith! Can you imagine how delighted I am to see you again?"

It had come—this supreme moment in her life. Alma felt a thrill of agony go over her for one little realizing span of time, and then she gave him her hand—so quietly, so indifferently, for he never, never should know she had cared. She looked at him fully from her shining eyes; he was just the same as ever, so grand, so nobly handsome.

"Indeed, I am glad to see you, Mr. Mordaunt. I have been expecting to meet you all the evening, for I had heard you were coming."

He looked smilingly back at her.

"So Mrs. Storey played me false, did she? I expressly told her I wished to take my Boston friends by surprise."

Alma's heart throbbled almost indignantly. Of course he wanted to take her by surprise to see how she would act. But she had been even with him.

"I am not a Boston friend, however; Mrs. Storey has been guilty of no falsity."

She spoke coldly.

"But a friend, as of old, I hope, Miss Alma. What if I should say I had come from Philadelphia for the sole purpose of seeing you?"

Alma froze still more. What business had he to talk to her—she, a married man! "I should be very sorry indeed to think you

had no higher incentive, Mr. Mordaunt. Of course, in common with your other friends, I am pleased to meet you again; I should also like to meet your wife."

She said it without a quiver of her sweet, icy voice.

He looked at her amazedly.

"My wife! I have no wife, Alma. The one woman I loved was separated from me by some strange fatality. You have heard perhaps of my betrothed bride—she is here, somewhere. I have no wife, nor will I ever have unless—Alma! read that!"

Almost every one had left the music-room for the dancing saloon, and they were sufficiently alone to permit him to hand her the letter Grace Cecil had sent him—the letter Alma had secreted.

She recognized the direction at a glance, and a pitiful paleness spread over her face as she bravely took it in hands that trembled in spite of her.

And she read it, every word, every letter, and then she closed it with a gasp.

"My only darling, what is my long-tarried answer to be?"

He had drawn her arm through his, and led her among the dusky, deserted aisles of the conservatory, where no eye could see the flush of anguish and shame on her sweet, penitent face.

"Oh! I love you, I love you, but it can never be as you wish! It must be my punishment to give you up, for—I was I who hid the letter—because—I was afraid you loved Grace!"

A look of gravity came over his impassioned face. Then a smile lighted his eyes as he took her in his arms.

"I think I can forgive you, my darling, for it was all for the love of me. You loved me then, and you punished us both; you love me now, and you can make reparation. Rather, Alma, you shall make reparation, for, by virtue of your sweet confession just now, I claim you in spite of yourself. Look up, dear, and kiss me—my darling little betrothed!"

And, as the one most concerned condoned her wrong-doing, surely no one else should withhold their forgiveness; and Alma and Ray were happy in their love, at last.

"EVER BELIEVE ME."

BY C. J.

Ever believe you true? Dear friend,
I can't repeat them o'er and o'er,
And kiss the paper where they lie.
How shall I thank you for this pledge,
That shall assure me you destroy
The doubt that you my love repaid,
And changes all my fears to joys!

Ever believe you true? I will!
I hold you to this word of mine!
This shall console me, now you're gone;
Still next my heart I'll bear the pain;
By day and night, wherever I go,
I shall my prized companion be;
And if a thought would 'gainst you rise,
This from all blame shall set you free.

Ah, need I say, believe me true?
You know how tender, yet how strong,
This shall be a constant, how I love,
Of all its throbs to you belong;
How faint 'twould burst its prison-walls
To reach my heart, and how I love,
How joyous was when you were near,
How sadly yearning now, alone.

Ay, till the weary life is done,
Though we again may never meet,
I'll be a dream passed, swift and sweet;
Still let thy knowledge of my love
Thy faith in humankind renew.
I shall be true, I shall be true,
And, to the last, believe me true!

THE MYSTERY OF MEREDITH PLACE.

OR,

BY SEELEY REGESTER,
AUTHOR OF "THE DEAD LETTER," ETC.

CHAPTER VII.—CONTINUED.

In the midst of this excitement Miss Miller led a secluded life. She had taken her place in this fashionable family simply as the governess of the three younger children; she made no attempt to gain unusual privileges; instead, she shrank from having her accomplishments displayed for the pleasure or amusement of these summer idlers. When she was not in the school-room, she sat in her chamber, or walked alone through the garden and woods. Many an evening I saw her sit for hours, immovable, her head leaning against the casement of her window.

Sometimes her brother Arthur called to see her. He was always welcomed by the ladies of the house. He knew how to make himself attractive; the Misses Chateaubriand, like all well-trained flirts, never had a superabundance of cavaliers—"all was fish which came to their nets," in the way of gentlemen attendants, where morning parties and picnics, as well as evening gatherings, were the order of the season. A young man like this, graceful, self-possessed, toned down by the amenities of civilized life to a respectable figure, was likely to be doubly appreciated in the country. That his sister was their sister's governess made no especial difference with this appreciation on the part of the young ladies, since the young gentleman was "only for the summer," and not for "all time."

I had a good view of the elder Miss Chateaubriand a few days after her arrival. I was perched among the branches of a hickory tree, across the way from Gramme Hooker's house. It was a retired place, and had the advantage of being merely that of my garret. I changed to it for variety, and many had been the hours I had spent in that "leafy and murmurous" chamber. As I say, I was perched in my secluded tower, with a book for company, when a party of ladies and gentlemen came trooping out of a narrow bridge-path which they had followed, idly, to find whether it would lead. They were in high spirits, laughing, singing and jesting, as they passed along. I thought some of the girls very pretty, as their ponies ambled by, but when Miss Chateaubriand (as I heard her escort address her), brought up the rear, all the other figures and faces seemed tame in comparison with hers. She was one of those women who look well on horseback; tall, of full figure, with a slender, supple waist; her black velvet riding habit and plume contrasted with the bright gold of her braided hair; her eyes were a very dark blue, looking black at times under the shelter of lashes and brows many shades darker than her hair. She was undoubtedly handsome, but there was more in her superb manners and witty conversation than in her beauty, to attract and fascinate her companions. All this, of course, I did not discover during my brief observation as she passed by; but I, like others, was dazzled at the first glance.

I saw what gentleman of the party elected himself her escort, kept nearest to her side, bent oftenest to listen or to speak. It was Arthur Miller; nothing less could be expected of him, yet there was more in her superb manners and witty conversation than in her beauty, to attract and fascinate her companions. All this, of course, I did not discover during my brief observation as she passed by; but I, like others, was dazzled at the first glance.

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and repetitions, which ensued before the drama of which I am the historian reached its denouement.

The village talked much of Miss Chateaubriand's popularity; her dress brilliant but not pretty, sister, Sophie, was also well liked; soon there was gossip about Arthur Miller in connection with them. It was remarked that he was neglecting Lillian Meredith, and it was not to be taken into consideration that the sister who called him so frequently to the old homestead.

No one suspected who it was who felt most keenly his growing neglect; that is, no one save I and perhaps one other. Miss Miller had returned to Hampton without an object. It might seem natural enough that she should think of recommending Meredith Place to her employers; I alone thought it singular that she should be willing to return under such circumstances, and at once set myself to find out what her object was. I was not long in doing so, for I was watching some one; that she, too, was playing the part of spy, and I was not long in determining that both of us kept in view the same person.

Once I had confronted Miss Miller, as several times I had felt urged to do, I should have pointed my finger at her, and said: "Thou art the woman!" Now I was divided in my opinion, racked by contrary theories, absolutely laughed at by conflicting facts.

About the first of October the Chateaubriands gave an evening entertainment of a more pretentious character than usual. The house was filled with guests from the city, and all their acquaintances in and about Hampton were invited. There was to be dancing in the upper hall, with music by the two colored fiddlers which our village boasted. Gramme Hooker told me that the housekeeper had inquired of her where she could engage an extra couple of waiters whom she should want on the evening of the ball. A rash desire took possession of me. I was so tired of my summer restrictions that it seemed to me that I must have a change of some kind. I wanted to see those persons together whom I had watched from a distance—to have them immediately under my eyes, and in concert and unawares of my vicinity. I resolved that I would go to the ball. I felt assured that I could enact the character of a mulatto waiter and escape recognition. I was so mad to go that I was willing to incur all the risk of detection; but I wanted to report to the housekeeper that he had secured one waiter, who would be promptly at his post in time to receive her instructions on the night of the party.

Sleep strayed at pasture in the woods at Meredith Place. The moon was black below the flock, and I think I may take to myself credit for the ingenuity with which I converted a portion of his fleeces into a wig, and a mustache of which the most dandified Adonis of the colored race need not have been ashamed. Gramme Hooker lent a large silk handkerchief, which I metamorphosed into a flaming cravat; the walnut trees gave the wherewithal to dye my skin a handsome brown.

When I dressed myself for my part in the evening's drama, I did not smile at my ridiculous figure; I never felt more solemn, more sad, than when I set out upon my adventure. This was no farce, but an awful reality in which I was engaged. I might pay with liberty and life for my ingenuity in running the risk of detection; but this was not what I thought of.

I was to see Lillian; to have the sweet privilege of watching her, hour after hour; of stealing near to her unawares. I should hear her voice, meet the glance of her eye, her garments might sweep across my feet, perchance, for I should certainly put myself in her way. I knew that she would attend the party, and the reason why. Inez had insisted upon accepting the urgent invitation which they, tired of attempting to parry her accusations. Something flashed in her hand, but a firm grasp seized her arm, and Miss Miller's voice, low but stormy with command, said:

"Go to Lillian, Mrs. Meredith; she is tired, and wishes to go home good. I will lead Inez to the hall-door, almost pushed her in, then returned to her brother. The two stood directly under my window.

Arthur, I must know what you are about! Do you intend to marry Mrs. Meredith?"

"If she were not so confounded poor I would. I admire the little panther immensely."

"Is she poor?"

"What under the sun do you ask me about it for?"

"I have half an idea that she may have means after all."

"Sis, what do you mean?"

"I have not watched you two all summer without results."

"Hang me, Annie, if I know what you are driving at."

"Arthur, you shall not trifle with me. Whatever you may have done, or contemplate doing, it is safer for you to confide in me. If I know anything I might be prepared to assist, if difficulties arose."

"Speak more plainly, sis; no beating about the bush, please."

"Well, then, do you know if Mrs. Meredith has possession of the money supposed to have been stolen?"

There was silence; I strained my ear for the answer.

"Confound it, sis; I might as well ask if you knew who put that quinine in the Doctor's wine, or what it was done for."

"Arthur?"

"Well, don't tease me, then. I know nothing of the old fellow's precious box, as I have told you again and again. Things have come to a pretty pass when one's own sister—"

"Never mind, Arthur; I did not know but you might have been taken into the confidence of others. I do not like you to be so intimate with Mrs. Meredith—she's an unprincipled, unscrupulous young thing, quite unfitted by nature or education to make a good—even a tolerable wife. If you are willing to marry poor, why do you give up Lillian?"

"I'm not willing to marry poor."

"Then cease flirting with Inez; it is not safe to play with fire."

"It is she who is flirting with me; don't blame me for it. She began it before the Doctor's mishap. I thought nothing serious of it; I should not like, now, to believe that his accident was owing to the power of my attractions."

"Don't!"

"Her voice was a groan as she said it."

"Beg your pardon, Annie, but I really should like to rest well. I don't profess to read your sex very easily; you know I have guessed somebody else might have been jealous."

He hesitated, but she made no remark.

"Do you think Joe Meredith is enjoying the proceeds?" he asked.

"Why do you ask me?"

It seemed as if she was impressed (as I was) with a feeling of untruth in all her brother did or said in possession.

When Miss Miller came into the supper-room, I was on the opposite side, with my back to the pantry, busily arranging dishes on a side-table. Being a member of the family, it was not thought strange that she should have an errand there. She passed quickly to the pantry; if there were an enemy there, or a person who had possessed himself of a dangerous secret, she wished to confront him at once. There was no grain of indecision in her make-up; she might

"I am so sorry you can not dance," he said. "So am I."

"I am sure you dance beautifully; I have heard of the grace of you Southern ladies."

"Not so well as Miss Chateaubriand."

"Perhaps not," he answered, laughing. "I will not swear to either until I see you dance."

"Sis!" she suddenly hissed between her shut teeth; "but beware! it is dangerous to trifle with me!"

Both spoke so low they did not expect to be heard by others, and were probably entirely oblivious of the colored servant leaning near by.

"I know you are dangerous," he returned, coolly—"there are those who have had experience of that."

She grew white, and red, and white again; her hand closed over the arm of the sofa, the flashing eyes fell. He continued:

"Don't make yourself disagreeable, Inez; you ought to be willing I should enjoy myself."

"No, no—not without me!" she whispered, passionately. "I'm not good, like her," mentioning toward Lillian; "I can not bear neglect—it sets my blood on fire. If you dance with that girl again I shall be angry. I tell you I can not but be jealous."

Her syllables, broken by the difficulty with which she spoke our language, were soft and pleading; her resentment was merged for the time in anxiety.

"I like to see you jealous—it makes your eyes so bright," and, with a smile, half mocking, half careless, he bowed and went away. The very next five minutes he was floating by in the waltz with Miss Chateaubriand, and his laughing eyes met the fixed gaze of Inez, as the pair whirled deliciously on in a glamour of perfumes, lights, and music, which mingled together as they moved.

CHAPTER IX.

CARTE AND COUNTER CARTE.

It was near eleven o'clock and I went down to the supper-room. For the next hour I was busy with my legitimate duties. I saw Miss Miller and Inez standing together, waited upon by Arthur, who seemed to have repented of his up-stairs flirtation.

Lillian was not in the supper-room at all. As soon as the first bustle was over, my desire to know where she was induced me to forsake my post and go out along the halls. Presently I found her in the library, which was entirely deserted save by her. Her head was bowed, upon the table; large tears welled and dropped in silence from her eyes. I struggled then with the fierce desire to betray myself to her, to tell her how I pitied her, to kiss away those mournful tears; but I was not certain that should I disclose myself, she would not shrink from me in horror. I went back and secured a salver, which I filled with the choicest delicacies of the feast, and brought and placed on the table by her side.

"Oh! not here," she said, looking up quickly, "you do not know; I could not eat here. Thank you, waiter," she added, as if afraid she had hurt my feelings by refusing.

I took the food away, angry with myself at my blunder.

Presently, the three in whom I was most interested left the supper-room in search of Lillian. I was in the butler's pantry, from which a small slatted window opened on the back porch, and I saw through the slats, Inez and Arthur walking in the porch. Her voice was so loud as to make me fear that she would be overheard by strangers; then she stopped abruptly in her walk, turned upon him, and struck him in the face. He attempted to soothe her, but she grew more and more excited. I was impressed with the painful absurdity of her conduct; she might have reason for anger, but this was not our woman's way of showing it. Finally her companion turned his back upon her, tired of attempting to parry her accusations. Something flashed in her hand, but a firm grasp seized her arm, and Miss Miller's voice, low but stormy with command, said:

"Go to Lillian, Mrs. Meredith; she is tired, and wishes to go home good. I will lead Inez to the hall-door, almost pushed her in, then returned to her brother. The two stood directly under my window."

Arthur, I must know what you are about! Do you intend to marry Mrs. Meredith?"

commit a crime, but she could face the consequences. Presently she came out, walking leisurely about the room; when she reached me she said:

"Walter, I was so busy attending to the guests, I forgot my own wants. Will you give me an ice, now?"

I brought her the ice, and handed her a chair. She sunk into it heavily; her paleness and haggardness had increased, but she did not tremble or appear nervous.

"Where do you live?" she asked. "I knew of no such person in this neighborhood—Watson, they said your name was?"

"Yes, in."

"Glancing around, and finding that no one was in our vicinity, she continued, in her ordinary tone:

"Your disguise is not as perfect as you might wish, Mr. Meredith. Let me advise you to leave here immediately, if you would consult your own safety."

"If you recognize me, why do you not raise the alarm?" I said, quite calmly, after my first start of surprise.

"I have no desire to take an active part in events; I would rather let them rest, if that were possible; indeed I would like to see you go away before it is too late—I have been fearing all the evening that you would be recognized, and I hate scenes!"

"Why are you at Meredith Place?"

"My business brought me here; I came here in the most legitimate way, but you—"

"Have never left it."

"That is no news to me, Mr. Meredith. Since the night when I met you in the arbor, I have had no doubt of your vicinity—I knew what ghost haunted this place. Are you watching me alone, or do others share in the honor of your regards?"

"Since you are so well advised, you ought to know."

"That is true, pardon me, Mrs. Miller."

With a movement too sudden for her to anticipate or prevent, I snatched at a slender gold chain about her neck, and pulled the charm which was attached to it from its hiding-place.

"I have been very curious about this key," I said, holding it in my hand, with a piece of the broken chain.

"She dared not struggle with me for it, for fear of drawing the attention of the servants. Her first thought was to look about to find if my action had been noticed."

"Give it back to me!—you shall not have it! How do you dare to rob me of my property?"

"Is it your property?"

"I found it," she answered, without reflection.

"Where?"

"No matter—it is mine. It will do you no good."

I examined the key by the lamp which stood near. It bore the mark, "Madrid, 1800," an ancient affair, of silver, and of unique shape.

"I remember it now!" I exclaimed, so I thought to cause some of the servants to look round; "I remarked it at the time, but had forgotten it. It is the key to that box! When my uncle showed us his treasure, I remember that key was in the lock!"

"I know it; I found it after the—his death. If I could find the box, too, you might have both to restore to their rightful owners."

"I believe you were the first to insinuate that I had the box; that I was the ingrate—the serpent which stung the bosom which warmed me?"

"I did—I thought so then; what else could I think?"

"Then you cannot complain that I entertained a similar opinion of you. You thought avarice prompted me; I believed jealousy prompted you; we have a right to our opinions, and to prove their truth if we can. About this key; what further good can it do you—you have tried everywhere to make it of use?"

"That is why I am so full of knowing where that money is—because I have seen you looking for it."

"Oh! but I am sharper than that—my suspicions reach further. I have seen you looking for it, apparently, which may be all a pretense, to cover up your knowledge."

"Why don't you denounce me, then—I could scarcely escape from all these people?"

"I am not ready."

"I will borrow this key for a time; if I find it of no use, I will return it to you in a year or two."

"In a year or two this tragedy will pass from the memory of men. One or two lives are blasted, but the world will forget. Know, that as long as I live, I am not resting nor forgetting!"

I placed the key in my pocket.

"It is not the key which is of value," she said, bitterly.

Just then Arthur, with five or six young gentlemen, came in to look for an extra bottle or two of champagne; they called upon me to furnish it.

"For shame!" I heard Miss Miller whisper to her brother; "you have had more than enough already—a fact which I had suspected, when he so recklessly annoyed Mrs. Meredith."

I do not know what it was betrayed me, but as I silently brought the wine, Arthur grew very quiet to watch me; this disconcerted me. I made an awkward movement; before I could defend myself, he sprang upon me, pulled my false hair from my head and face—

"Joe Meredith, as I'm alive! Secure him, boys!"

"Let him alone, brother Arthur!—do let him go!" pleaded Miss Miller, catching him by the arm, and speaking in an agonized whisper.

"Let him go! No, indeed! Why should I? The infernal scoundrel! The whole company has been looking for you, Joe!"

He thought he had me, backed up as he was by half a dozen men; but I had no intention of being taken then. Retreating down the room until I came opposite a door which led into the kitchen hall, I sprang over the table, knocked down the half-stupified waiters, who faintly opposed me, and to the music of crashing china and the shouts and cries of men and women, dashed down the passage and out into the darkness. By daylight I could not have escaped; as it was, I easily concealed my flight, and looking back, as I plunged into the forest, saw lights glimmering hither and thither in the grounds, and heard excited cries.

Mrs. Chateaubriand's ball was more of a sensation than I had anticipated.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 385.)

The Velvet Hand:

OR,
THE IRON GRIP OF INJUN DICK.

A Wild Story of the Cinnabar Mines.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,

AUTHOR OF "INJUN DICK," "OVERLAND KIT," "ROCKY MOUNTAIN BOB," "KENTUCK THE SPORT," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A LAST STAKE.

Old Father Time in his eternal flight stays not, no matter how humbly we pray or how earnestly we curse; and so, dating from the night when the strange interview between the haughty California girl, Blanche del Colma, and the Velvet Hand had taken place, ten days had passed, ten days fraught with much consequence to some of the characters in our story.

And to no one of them more than to Fernando Del Colma, had the flight of time furnished greater matter for anxiety.

The mortgage on the Cinnabar property came due; Del Colma was unable to raise the amount necessary to meet it, although he had worked like a horse to procure the money. But, in mining parlance, the Cinnabar property was "a bad egg." Men shook their heads when asked to advance the sum and take the mine for security.

The story of the lode was too well known in the town. That lead was presided over by a demon who promised great stores of wealth, but who invariably ended by devouring the unlucky mortals who controlled the property.

"Don't you believe that there is gold in the lode?"

"Oh, yes," was the reply, unhesitatingly given by one and all; "but what's the use of the gold being there if it's going to cost more than it's worth to get it out?"

The story of Talbot's bloody adventures in connection with the mine, was still current in the town, although not a man who listened to the legend-like tale even dreamed that bold and hardy Injun Dick still walked the earth, and still kept watch and ward over his old-time treasure-house.

"Oh, no, sir," the acute and canny men of means replied, when asked to put up a few thousand dollars on the strike. "No Cinnabar lode for me; no, sir, no sugar in mine. That place has either killed or broke every man who ever had anything to do with it. It is an unlucky bit of property; 'bad medicine,' sir, as one of the heathen bucks would say. It would really be a benefit to the town if an earthquake should come along and shake five or six thousand tons of earth and rock right down on top of it; yes, sir, bury the Cinnabar lode so deep that pick-axe and spade would never be able to dig it up again."

With such sentiments common to the solid men of the town, no wonder that Del Colma was unable to raise a cent on the security of the mine.

Payment being refused, the summary aid of the law was invoked; so rigidly had the papers been drawn that there was no chance for a delay. The court put the sheriff in possession of the property, and a day was set for a sale almost immediately.

After the legal process was executed and the strong arm of the law had wrested the property from the Californian, sullen and downcast Del Colma came in to his supper.

"Well?" Blanche questioned, inquiringly, although from the look upon his face she easily guessed that the worst had transpired.

"It is all over," he answered; "the mine is now in the hands of the sheriff, and will be sold at public auction the day after to-morrow."

"Then you have lost all that you have invested?"

"Yes; there is only one chance to save anything from the wreck," he observed, thoughtfully. "The mortgage amounts to ten thousand dollars; the interest and legal expenses will be a couple of thousand more—about twelve thousand all told. Already I have invested double that; in fact, the mine stands me in over thirty thousand dollars. It is good property—I don't care what people say about it. It is as rich a mine as there is in all northern California, and will pay splendidly just as soon as it gets in good working order. Now, to pay off the mortgage would cost twelve thousand dollars, but at the auction sale the chances are a hundred to one that the entire property will not fetch over five or six thousand dollars, so great is the feeling against the lode on the part of the money-men of the town—the fools believe that it always brings bad luck to whoever owns it. If I could raise five or six thousand dollars, I would buy the property in—buy it in your name, for the law holds me answerable for the difference between the amount the place brings at the sale and the sum due from me. Of course as long as I have nothing, my creditors can get nothing, but with the mine running—and I am certain that the ore we are getting out now will pay handsomely—I could soon pay off the debt."

"But five or six thousand dollars is a large sum," the girl observed. "Can you get the amount?"

Fernando drummed with his fingers upon the edge of the table, by the side of which he had seated himself.

"I can't borrow it," he observed, after quite a long pause. "Nobody will loan on the unlucky hole."

"Perhaps there may be some truth in the superstition; the mine has not brought good luck to us."

"One swallow does not make a summer," the brother retorted. "It is my evil fortune; the mine has had nothing to do with it."

"Perhaps not; but if you cannot borrow the money, then it is hopeless to think of still controlling the property."

"I don't know about that."

Blanche looked at her brother, inquiringly; it was plain that he had some plan in view.

"Do you not think that we ought to make some effort to retain the mine?" he continued.

"It seems a shame to lose so much," she replied.

"That ring upon your finger is worth five hundred dollars at the least," he said, pointing to the diamond, which has already played so prominent a part in our story.

"This ring?" and a burning blush swept rapidly over the beautiful face of the girl; but the tell-tale blush was gone in a moment, and Fernando, busy with his own thoughts, gazing intently upon the precious stone, did not notice it.

"Yes; if you are willing to risk the loss of the ring, I may be able to raise five or six thousand dollars."

"I do not understand," Blanche observed.

"And I cannot explain," he replied, a tinge of hauteur in his voice. "If you are willing to risk it, well and good; give it to me, and I will make the trial, but I cannot explain to you what I am going to do, or how I am going to do it. I know that there is a chance to raise the money, if you will give me the ring to work on. It is not possible that fortune will forever frown on me; the tide must turn sometime; it is a long lane that has no turning, they say. I am desperate now, and must play a bold game; Fortune is a fickle jade, and now at the eleventh hour she may choose to smile upon me."

Without a word Blanche took the ring from her finger, kissed it passionately—two sweet memories were connected with the charming bauble—and then handed it to her brother.

The dark eyes of the Californian lighted up as his fingers grasped the ring.

"If fortune does not change, why, then, the sooner I am out of this evil world the better!" he exclaimed.

"While we live we may hope," exclaimed the girl.

Woman though she was, she was made of stouter stuff than the Californian.

Fernando rose, putting the ring upon his finger.

"Before midnight this little sparkler shall win back the mine for me!" he announced, with a glow of triumph on his face.

Already the gray mists of the night were rapidly descending. The Californian took up his hat.

"Will you not stay for supper?" Blanche asked.

"Oh, I have no appetite. Food will be repulsive to me until this suspense is settled."

And then his eyes fell upon the long-necked wine-bottles upon the side-board; the sole remains of the famous vintage which had once reposed so snugly in the ancestral cellars of the Del Colma family.

"I am not hungry, but I thirst," he continued; and then he filled himself a generous glass of the rich wine, tossed it off at a draught, kissed the sweet forehead of the girl, and sallied forth.

Up and down through Cinnabar town went the Californian, and one man alone he sought—Velvet Hand!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DESPERATE CHANCE.

VELVET HAND was found at last; seated on a boulder on the hill-side, he was gazing vacantly down upon the Cinnabar mine.

It was the veteran Joe Bowers who directed the Californian to the right spot.

"Pard, methinks I saw you," he exclaimed, with all that dignity so peculiar to the bummer. "Oft in the still night, when slumber's chain holds the galeots of this hyer wicked world, hev I seed that velvet-coated sharp a-sittin' on the hill-side, right above the Cinnabar strike, a-gazin', in meditation wrapped, down into the valley. He's a deep cuss, he is. He goes up thar' an' steadies his nerves, so that he kin flax the boys at poker when the midnight hours draws on. He's jest ole p'son now, I tell yer."

Acting upon this advice, Del Colma climbed the hill-side, and, sure enough, he then found the man he sought.

The face of the sharp was clouded; it was with troubled eyes that he looked down upon the mining valley.

The sound of footsteps aroused him from his meditation, and, in some surprise, he looked up. Few feet ever trod the little trail up the hill-side.

"Good-evening," said the Californian, advancing.

"Good-evening," Velvet Hand replied, distantly, evidently not pleased at having his privacy intruded upon.

"I have been seeking you."

"Yes?"

The Californian seated himself close to the other.

"And not finding you in the town, I was directed here."

It was quite plain to Del Colma why Velvet Hand had selected this seel on the hill-side, sheltered by the spreading pines and the comely junipers, as a lounging place.

A short eighth of a mile away was the Cinnabar property, and from that spot one could command a full view of the mine and the buildings.

"One can command a fine view of the Cinnabar property from this point, I see."

"Yes."

Velvet Hand was strangely reserved.

"You know, I presume, that the Cinnabar property is in the hands of the sheriff?"

"I heard so."

"I owe about twelve thousand dollars on it which I am unable to pay."

"That is bad."

"And of the twelve thousand which I ought to have, you have got about six."

"Yes?"

Velvet Hand was not manifesting the slightest interest in the matter.

"Lost to you at cards," Del Colma continued.

"If a man will play, he must expect to lose sometimes," the sharp replied, in his cool way.

"I have lost always!" the Californian retorted, bitterly.

"I wouldn't play then if I were you."

"When I need your advice I will ask it!" Del Colma exclaimed, haughtily.

The lip of the sharp curled just a little, but he did not reply. Possibly he saw that the Californian was in a desperate mood, and he forbore to provoke him to a quarrel.

"There is only one chance for me to save my property."

"Your property?" questioned Velvet Hand.

"Yes—the mine."

"Oh, yes, I see. Well, you are not the first man whom the Cinnabar mine has broke."

Was the cool and hardy sharp a believer, then, in the legend which gave to the golden lode the character of a destroying demon?

"If I had six thousand dollars I might be able to buy the mine in at the sheriff's sale."

"Yes; but six thousand dollars don't grow on every bush," Velvet Hand observed, tartly.

You have managed to make that much out of me."

"Do you want me to give it back?" the Cinnabar man asked, sharply. "Are we a couple of boys playing marbles in fun, the winnings to be returned when the game ends?"

The Californian was nettled by the speech, and threw his head up proudly.

"I ask favors from no man," he cried, "and least of all from you. I have sought you out to-night to challenge you to play. Before morning dawns I intend to win six thousand dollars from you."

"Well, if you do that, I sha'n't be able to buy the Cinnabar mine, to-morrow, at the sheriff's sale."

Del Colma started as if he had trodden upon a snake.

"You buy the Cinnabar mine?" he cried.

"Why not? It will be sold to the highest bidder, won't it? Why shouldn't I buy as well as anyone else? I am getting rather tired of being a gambler—a card-sharper, that is what gentlemen like yourself term me, although you are all eager enough to try to win the money that we gamblers risk. When I become the owner of the Cinnabar lode, I shall be a gentleman—a man of property; I can play cards, too, just the same as ever, but I will not be a gambler any longer. You will observe that there is a great deal of difference between the man who plays cards for amusement and the man who plays that he may live."

Del Colma winced at the sarcasm.

"Of course you are at liberty to buy the mine if you bid high enough."

"I'll give thirteen thousand dollars for it, if I can't get it cheaper."

The Californian looked astonished; he had no idea that Velvet Hand possessed such a sum.

"Oh, I mean it!" the sharp exclaimed.

"Will you play with me to-night?" Fernando asked, abruptly.

"No."

"You are afraid to give me a chance to win my money back?"

"I said once that I wouldn't play with you again."

"You owe me my revenge, and you are no man if you refuse to give it to me!" Del Colma cried, hotly. "See this diamond ring, my sister's jewel, given by her freely in this last

extremity. It is all I have. It is worth five hundred dollars at the least, and I challenge you to put up that sum; take the ring, and then we will play."

"It's a bargain," cried Velvet Hand, abruptly. "I will buy the ring from you and give you five hundred for it, and you shall have the privilege of redeeming it at any time within a month."

"And you will play with me?" asked the Californian, eagerly.

"Yes; as long as you have a cent of money left," Velvet Hand replied, with cool irony.

The two men rose to their feet, and down the hill-side to the town they went; straight to the Occidental Hotel they proceeded, secured a room, laid in a stock of cards and candles, and immediately proceeded to work.

The game proceeded at first with varying fortunes, but as midnight approached luck deserted the Californian, and with the stroke of twelve he sat a haggard, penniless man.

The thousand dollars lay in a heap on Velvet Hand's side of the table.

He drew from his pocket two bags, one marked a thousand and the other five hundred, and placed them beside the heap of coin.

"Your sister is a charming girl; when I own the Cinnabar mine, I shall be a suitable match for any woman in California. I'll put up this twenty-five hundred dollars against your consent in writing to my wooing her, and take the chances of a single cut out of the cards."

In desperation the Californian consented. He cut the cards and displayed a jack.

Velvet Hand cut and showed a queen.

"These women always did favor me," he said, laughing.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 380.)

WHO?

The birds sing in the tree-tops
Their heaven-born songs of love;
And a delicious sense of calmness
Comes down from the heavens above.

All nature seems wrapt in gladness,
Over pebbles and stones—far away—
Of love's idyl—transcendent—
The world can ne'er seem dull.

A breath of joyous sweetness,
Redolent with perfume of the flowers,
Comes to me—entraptured—
Unconscious of the flying hours.

The cooing of birds in the meadow,
The droning of insects on the wing,
And the rippling of the rill—soporific—
Fed by the moss-covered spring.

The babbling of the brook as it rushes
Over pebbles and stones—far away—
Keeps time to my heart's joyous beatings
As I think of my darling to-day.

The Bouquet Girl; OR, HALF A MILLION DOLLARS.

BY AGILE PENNE,
AUTHOR OF "ORPHAN NELL," "STRANGE STORIES OF MANY LANDS," "THE DETECTIVE'S WARD," "WOLF OF ENHOVEN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER VIII.
A MYSTERIOUS GENTLEMAN.

A HALF A MILLION OF DOLLARS!

It was quite a striking picture just at that moment, and any enterprising artist would have jumped at the chance to transfer the scene either to canvas or to the sensitive plate of the camera.

The young and beautiful queen of burlesque, arrayed in the shimmering silken robe, the handsomest carriage dress that the drives of Central Park had seen for many a long day, with her hand thrown carelessly over the high back of a luxuriant arm-chair, and gazing with surprised face at the stranger; her position a model for the artist!

The jockey-like Englishman, in his checked suit of tweed, hat in hand, staring at the speaker in profound surprise; even the scanty side-whiskers of the acute Tim seemed to share the wonder and stick out more than usual.

And the stranger—this tall, thin, elderly man with the hawk-nose, restless black eyes, glittering like black beads; hair black as jet and cropped tightly to his head; olive face, smoothly shaven, but plainly betraying the dark-blue marks which told of a heavy beard were nature allowed her way; dressed in a shabby, thread-bare suit of black, very much out of style—the pantaloons baggy and loose—the coat long-skirted and single-breasted, buttoned up tight in the throat, no sign of linen being visible—standing by the door, his dilapidated slouch-hat in his hand, the other raised a trifle above his head after the style of the peculiar races of southern Europe who are nothing if not theatrical.

"A half-a-million of dollars!" he repeated. "So speak I and what I speak I know!"

The man had a decided foreign accent. "Behold me, the Count, Philippe de Castiglione!"

The same thought occurred at the same moment to both the listeners to this odd speech.

The man was a lunatic.

Avise was as brave as a lion; the girl did not really know what fear was, and so she gazed with steady eyes upon the stranger, but as for Tim he deftly sidled behind a chair and looked around him for a weapon in case the man became violent.

"Mademoiselle, I have had the honor to see you on the boards of the theater many times," the man continued, addressing his conversation with a graceful bow to Avise. "Your face so beautiful—so charming! It is imprinted here, upon my heart. I see you many times—I do not recognize you at first, for it is long ago. I have had many troubles; my mind is not so good as it used to be; but at last it flashes upon me! Yes, you

This operation was very adroitly performed so as not to excite attention. First-class hotels don't like to have it even supposed that suspicious characters can gain admittance at any time.

"Great heaven! Why do you ask?" exclaimed the stranger, in the extravagant, theatrical manner, so natural to him.

"You're not a guest of the hotel, and I want to know what you were doing up stairs. Come, speak out quick or I'll hand you over to the police," the clerk replied.

"Eternal powers! You would not dream of such an outrage!" the Italian exclaimed, not loudly, but in great astonishment, apparently.

"I will unless you give a satisfactory explanation."

"Listen then, although I protest against this interrogation," the Italian responded with great dignity. "I am an artist—the Signor Castiglione of the Grand Opera—a call I have had the honor to make upon the Mademoiselle Winne. I am poor; genius struggles ever with the dark angels of adversity. Mademoiselle Winne is as good as she is beautiful. I have come to her and tell my sad story, and she opens her purse-strings, bright, beautiful angel! and I now depart happy."

The clerk was inclined to believe this story, for his experience with the "children of genius" in the stage and opera line had brought him in contact with some pretty seedy customers. It was plain that the man was a gentleman, and he talked like an artist—a child of the Bohemian tribe; therefore the clerk apologized for his mistake, and explained how necessary it was to be cautious in a city hotel in regard to strangers.

"Say no more; it was your duty; from the bottom of my soul do I admire men who do their duty perform!" exclaimed the Italian, grandiloquently. "Pardon, signor, but will you favor me by taking a glass of wine with me? Everywhere I go, I hear it said there is no wine in America to compare with the nectar of the Fifth Avenue."

"Oh, excuse me; but you must take a drink with me!" replied the clerk, who was a jolly fellow naturally.

The Italian protested that he couldn't think of such a thing, but he marched up to the bar nevertheless and took his whiskey like a man.

This social operation performed, he laid his skilful finger upon the arm of the other.

"The Mademoiselle Winne is an angel; with her money she is as free as water; at present I struggle in the waves of adversity. I, Philippe de Castiglione, who as the principal tenor have sung before the kings and queens of Europe in all the good theaters—the Opera, Paree, La Scala, Milan. Here in America the directors do not see it; they go back on me, diavolo! I starve but for that bright angel, the Mademoiselle Winne! I presume there will be no objection to my coming here to see her sometimes?"

"Oh, no, now that we know who you are," the clerk hadn't a doubt in regard to the man's story. He was so much like the genuine article—the imported artist, "down on his luck"—that even the experienced hotel man was taken in.

"Thanks! In my prayers I shall remember your kindness, and when I make my 'hit'—the time will come—and all New York is at my feet throwing largess, I will not forget my generous benefactor! No! your kindness repay I will as thousand-fold!" And then, with a graceful, dignified bow, the Italian marched out of the hotel.

Outside, a comrade awaited the signor. An Italian, too, apparently, but quite a contrast to the noble count, being short and thick and fat. He was dressed in a shabby black suit, much too large for him, and a dozen years at least behind the prevailing fashion.

Like the other, his coat was buttoned up tight in the throat, and no linen was visible. It was odds that he didn't possess any.

His face, like his person, was fat, very dark in color, the chin ornamented by a peaked beard, and the thick-lipped mouth shaded by a huge mustache, the ends carefully waxed. His little, evil-looking eyes were like two jet-black beads, and the smell of garlic that came from his person was enough to sicken one who detested that pungent vegetable, so dear to the heart of the Latin races.

Colonel Anselmo del Frascati, this individual was called, and, as if to give proof that he had a right to the military title, he bore a sword in his hand, which he either flourished, saber-like, in the air, or else beat against the legs of his pantaloons.

"Ha, ha," he exclaimed, as the tall man emerged from the hotel, "you have been long! How goes the fight? Did she see you point, hey?"

The count shook his head.

"And you got nothing, diavolo?"

"The count displayed a single half dollar.

"Bah! that is a dinner only; did you tell her of six half-a-million, hey?"

"Yes."

"And she nothing make of it, hem?"

"No."

"I have a wait for you some time."

"Be calm, my friend," and he laid his skilful finger on the greasy coat-sleeve of the other. "I have much the acquaintance of one of the hotel young men. I am a singer at the opera and come to see the Mademoiselle Winne as a brother artist."

"Ha, ha! it is good—beautiful—divine!"

"Come, we will dine?"

The two proceeded down the street, and as they went, the snaky Italian unfolded his plan.

"If we do not succeed—if the hair we do not find, a prize we can make here," and the speaker nodded back to the hotel.

"Diavolo! that is superb; how?"

"Jewels—real no paste!" the count explained, mysteriously. "Five thousand dollars' worth—more, maybe. I am an opera singer; they will not suspect me in the hotel, for I call upon the Mademoiselle Winne. The lock is nothing—bah! a child could open it; so easy!"

"Ten devils, but that is good!"

"We can make no money out of the half-a-million; we watch our chance and steal the jewels. South America is near; many countrymen of ours there; we will go. Five thousand dollars; it is a fortune!"

"But I have no other girl found."

"Ha, ha!"

"Go image of ze picture, but hair dark!"

"Good! We will have our pickings out of the half million, after all!"

CHAPTER X.

RONALD CRAIG.

The farce with which the evening's performance commenced at Wallack's was over; the farce was merely to play the audience into their seats so that the burlesque might be played to a full house, and to those who did come early the farce was a sort of appetizer to prepare the mind for the full enjoyment of the attraction of the evening.

With the farce Ronald Craig's duties for the evening terminated, as he was not gifted with the talents necessary to the burlesque artist. He could neither sing a comic negro song, nor dance the soul-inspiring breakdown; flip-flops were foreign to his nature; nor could he assume the garb of the other sex and charm an enlightened audience by a coarse caricature of a pretty woman.

And therefore, as the young man was a student and a gentleman, one who had embraced the stage from sheer love of the player's art, it naturally followed that he held a subordinate position at the meager salary of twenty dollars per week, out of which he was expected to dress in the height of fashion, while the burlesque artists' pay ranged from thirty per week up to a thousand.

But the young man had chosen his vocation, and although heartily sick of the life couldn't very well get out of it—so crowded are all the avenues that lead to a competence, nowadays.

A sober, steady, hard-working young fellow was the actor, with few enemies, and not a great many friends either, for the semi-world life common to nearly all the followers of the stage was not at all to his liking. He was emphatically a student, and all the time was studying hard, striving to fit himself for some other pursuit than the one which he was now following.

The artist world that knew Ronald Craig called him proud and stuck-up, and resented his holding himself aloof from their gay gatherings.

But the young man was not proud; he was simply a gentleman in his instincts, who chose to pick his associates.

Some of the sons and daughters of the Thespian art are worthy people as can be found in all the wide world; but then, there are others, so tainted in mind and morals, that to be compelled to associate with them was, to a pure-hearted fellow like Ronald Craig, as dreadful as to herd with the felon hosts of Sing Sing.

And because he held apart from these unworthy creatures, the bane and degradation of a noble art—pure in itself as its sisters, painting and sculpture—the artist-world "made mouths" at the young man.

Little he cared though, for he was striving with all his might to escape from the circle of fire which he now lived in. He was angry because he would not associate with it, he despised that world and its opinion.

The beautiful burlesque actress, the dashing Avise Winne, could not understand why the young man seemed so dull to the favor which she was lavishing upon him. He was not blind, did not lack sense, and yet he did not manifest the slightest interest in Avise Winne, although, just at that time, half the empty-headed young men—some old ones too, for that matter—in New York were running madly after the charming queen of the blondes.

Avise, shrewd and cunning, believed that she had a rival, and so she had dispatched her man-of-all-work, the patient and unflinching Timoleon, in quest of information, and with what result the reader already knows.

At nine o'clock Craig had changed his stage costume for his usual street dress, and was on his way home.

Avise, as usual, had taken particular care to encounter him as he made his way to the back-door of the theater, as she invariably did, every evening, so as to be able to exchange a few words with him.

The actress' intent was so apparent that the young man could not very well avoid her, but with his cool, easy politeness he never gave her cause to hope that he was being roused to the pitch of passion which was raging within her fair veins. A few commonplace remarks he would make, then bid her "good-night," and depart, leaving the proud young actress ready to flame out in open rage.

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natural curiosity therefore made him take a good look at the man with whom she had been talking, the more so, because he saw that the stranger was dressed in the height of style—in fact, a little over-dressed.

The man, busy with his own thoughts, passed by the actor without noticing him in the least, but Craig recognized him at once, although not personally acquainted with him, for Captain Jack Leiper, the famous divorce lawyer, was one of the notables of New York; few well-informed men who were not acquainted with the dashing figure of the lawyer, always so elegantly attired.

The actor, upon discovering who the gentleman was, stood still for a moment and looked after him.

The girl standing upon the stoop of the old barracks was surely the Bouquet Girl; he had clearly recognized her voice; but what business had this notorious divorce lawyer with her?

Determined to solve the riddle at once, the actor proceeded straight to the house. The two men who had followed him were snugly laid in a dark doorway on the other side of the street.

"Why, Frank, what did that fellow want?" the actor asked.

"Not much," answered the girl, smiling a glad welcome; "he only wants to make me a present of half a million of dollars."

(To be continued—commenced in No. 387.)

THE CHANGE OF TIME.

BY A. W. BELLAW.

'Tis said the seasons of the blood
An even seven-years orbit run.
And then the man is changed in man
And all he was is over and done.

But, oh, what change can come to us,
Who go through years and tears and truth,
Starred toward love's isle of bliss,
In the warm tenor of our youth?

And the old covenants, thronging thick,
Have hardly left us chance for change;
Our swallow hearts are round the nest
From whence their wings can never range.

Stories of a Pulman Car.

BY HENRI MONTCALM.

II.

THE BELLOOCHISTAN BROTHERS.

[THE FLASHY MAN'S STORY.]

My story you've heard, except in print of truth (began the rough-looking, flashily-dressed man, who, in spite of his huge watch-chain and loud manner, evidently had a kind heart under his plaid waist-coat), and I reckon I rather hold over my story-telling friend in that regard. I can't tell it as glib and ready-like as he did, either. I never had much schoolin', and I expect I shall mix things up a good deal.

I've been banging about the world with traveling circuses ever since I heard of me some time or other, and it's possible you've heard of me. I'm one of the Blue Brothers of Belloochistan.

We were called "Blue" on the bills to draw attention; and as for Belloochistan, why I came from the Isle of Guernsey myself, and Joe Downs, he was born and partially raised down here on Long Island Sound. Howsumever, that don't matter. The name looked well in big letters, and it drew.

In them days I'm going to tell you of Joe and me traveled with the Grand Consolidated European. I presume you've heard of the European, if you disremember the Brothers.

There wasn't a circus going out of New York then that could hold over us. We had Captain John Josephus, the greatest living American bareback rider; and Madame Celeste, and Master Harry, the Infant Prodigy; and Signor Pampanini, with his trained dogs; and Mister Merryboy, the popular clown of the day; and a thousand other attractions too numerous to recite. I will say, however, of the pageant, gentlemen, that it was quite unequalled by anything that had ever been showed in this country. It was gorgeous in the extreme, and whole cities used regularly to turn inside out to see us.

But it's about the Belloochistan Brothers I was going to tell you. Joe and I had a big reputation in them days, though possibly, as I say, you may never have heard of us. Ours was the trapeze line—a new thing then—and we drew better than any other names on the bills. And we got our prices, too. I wasn't as heavy then as I be now, and was strong as a bull; and Joe, he wasn't as muscular as I was but he was lighter. That's why he allus took the lower hold and I the upper. Why, Lord bless you, he could turn twice to my once and was spry as a cat.

We had been so long together that we got quite fond of each other, Joe and I. We called ourselves a kind of partnership—we two—and nobody else was ever admitted till one day the manager came to us and wanted us to take Master Harry on the trapeze with us. The boy was handsome and smart and he thought that we three together might do some very pretty posturing. Joe—he was allus a gruff kind of feller anyway and nobody ever liked him unless they knewed him well—he refused right up and down; but I rather liked the idea myself and I worked him over. I had taken a notion to the boy Harry the first time he came among us—a sad-eyed, intelligent, gentlemanly little fellow who never ought to have been there. I came to love him as though he had been my very own before many weeks, and he got to thinkin' a heap of me. Poor little kid! that was natural enough when I was the only one that didn't scold him and abuse him the whole time. And after a while, he told me his story—and a sad enough story it was, too. He never would tell me his real name, nor where he come from—he had a kind of morbid idea that if it were known who his folks were, or if he went back to them now, after his circus life, that he should disgrace them forever. So he stayed with us, though I know that life was a burden to him in the circus and he would rather have died than not—and indeed he couldn't well help himself, for Pinkham threatened to whip him to death if he tried any games on him—and as I say, much about his old life, yet I did get this much out of him, that his father was very rich, and lived in a big house, and had lots of fine people come and see him—only Harry had never been happy there because his father did not love him at all and gave all his love to Charlie. Charlie was Harry's brother and was jest his age and size, only Charlie's eyes were blue instead of dark and his hair was jest like gold. And they loved each other dearly and Harry knew Charlie must have cried when he went off down the road and never came back any more. Only Harry could not live like that, with his

father hating him; so he ran away to join a circus—a life that seemed all gold and sunshine to him. Ah, gentlemen, he found out soon enough that the gold was only brass and the sunshine pretty much storn.

And there is one other character in this story—for I take it, gents, that a story would be a pretty poor thing without a girl in it—and that was Dolly Nevers. I hain't much to say about her, and I think, too, the less I say the better. She wasn't jest your right sort as an angel then, and I loved her very much as she tended she loved me. And it was this that made trouble between me and Joe. Joe he was in love with her too, you see, and somehow or other, bein' more polished and sociable like than he was, I got the inside track of him there, and she didn't treat him half-way decent sometimes. But he was a mulish kind of feller anyway, and that only made him worse. He set his heart on her and he was bound to have her; and he got more and more sulky every day, and by and by he wouldn't say a word more to me than he could help. That's the way matters stood when we started out from New York in the spring again. I tried once or twice to bring him to his senses with kind words, but I got no satisfaction. It must have looked mighty queer to the audience sometimes to see us two on the swing together, each with the other's life in his hands, and scowling at each other all the time like deadly enemies. But I see you are getting impatient for my story, gentlemen, so I'll come to it at once.

One day we were advertised to show at Wrentham, a country town down in Massachusetts. It was jest after dinner, not long before the afternoon performance, that I went around to the back side of the dressing-room and came suddenly upon Joe sitting there all alone by himself. There was a look of fierce hatred in his eyes as he looked up and met mine. I had never known him look at me so ugly before. But I stepped right up to him and put my hand on his shoulder. "Joe," says I, as kindly like I knew how—and I swear, gentlemen, I did feel kind of sorry about it—Joe and I used to be such good friends and I really liked him—Joe," says I, "how long is it since you've been like this? Has the old firm got to bust up, suh?"

He never looked up as he replied back, "Curse you, what do you come here for? Why don't you keep clear of me! Don't you know it is as much as I can do to keep my fingers off your cowardly throat?"

This kind of got my blood up and I answered up kind of mad. "All right," I said, "What must be must. A friend's a friend, and an enemy's an enemy. But as for your laying hands on me, Joe Downs, that's a game two can play at, and I left him and went off towards the big tent."

We had a good audience that afternoon—we allus did in country towns, for in the country folks comes ten miles to see a good show—and the Grand Entree never was finer, and Madame Celeste never more graceful, nor Captain Josephus never more glorious in his Twelve-in-Hand Bareback Exploit. Then came the trained horse Eccebalier, then the tamed Indians and the mule-riding, and then "The Blue Brothers of Belloochistan, assisted by Master Harry, the Infant Prodigy." The swings were let down and arranged, and we three came bounding into the ring, and were greeted with rapturous applause, especially Master Harry, who was a favorite wherever we went.

I went up first, for—as I have said—being the strongest and heaviest I was generally above. Then came Joe and took his seat on the bar by my side, and then, like a young monkey, Master Harry climbed swiftly up the rope and placed himself between us. We did not exert ourselves specially at first, saving the best for the last. Separately each went on to the upper bar—first Joe, then I, and finally little Harry, each winning in turn rounds of applause from the people on the seats. Then Joe and I took the bar and went through our whole programme of double-posturing, and we were without equals at that time if I do say it. And there wasn't many difficult or dangerous postures possible which we didn't execute, you may be sure—and all as easy and calm as if we'd been five feet from the ground, with a feather-bed below, instead of full forty and nothing at all but solid ground to fetch up on if we slipped. Yet why shouldn't we be easy and calm when we'd been through it a thousand times before, and knew each other perfectly—only once in a while as I met Joe's eyes I caught slinking back in them a hateful, treacherous look that was new to them, and for the instant I felt nervous.

At last came the final act, the Great Human Chain, in which all three performed together. It was a simple thing enough in reality, though it looked terrible, I fancy, to the audience. We all went into the upper swing and the lower one was drawn aside out of the way. Then this was how we did it: first, Harry went down, swingin' himself free of the bar and holding fast to Joe's ankle; then Joe next, putting his hands in mine, while I, apparently with great labor and difficulty, let him and myself down slowly and gradually till we hung there a veritable human chain, supported by the slight swing to which I clung, head downward, by my legs. So much did not frighten the audience very much, but pleased them a good deal, and they clapped it loudly. But when little Harry, who had been clinging by his hands, suddenly reversed himself and was all at once suspended there head downward, looking his legs in Joe's, then a shudder passed over the whole tent. And yet, as I say, there was really nothing to shudder at. Joe and I were men of nerve and well used to the business; and I never saw a boy prodigy with less nervousness about him than Harry. There was no danger of him.

In this position we usually remained for nearly a minute. By that time Harry and I would get enough of it with our heads hanging downward and the blood rushing to our brains. And during this minute it was the custom for Joe to be drawn up by the untied strength of our arms till his face was on a level with mine. This was a point that always tickled the crowd amazingly. Hardly had Joe gotten into position this time when I felt Joe drawing himself up with a kind of fierce energy that startled me. In a moment his face was close to mine, and his hot breath burning my cheek; and then, during the instant that we remained so, clearly and distinctly he hissed in my ear these words:

"Give me your word you'll give up the girl, Bill Hanson, or as I'm a living man, I'll drop the boy."

Then slowly he let himself down again for a moment.

What do you make of it, gentlemen—what do you think you would have made of it if you had been in my place? I was a strong man and by no means a timid one; but I tell you, when I heard those words of Joe's, there came over me such a sickening and a weakening that I felt as though my legs would let go

for me. It all flashed across me at once—how much that woman was to me and how much I must give up to save the boy—for I knew that in that way only could I save him. I knew Joe meant every word he said. He was crazy with jealousy and hatred, and would think nothing of dropping Harry off just then. But I did not hesitate at all. I had no thought but to comply—no thought but to save Harry from the terrible fate I knew would come to him if I refused. And then, again, I felt Joe raising himself, and his face came up close to mine again, and I gasped. "It shall be as you say, Joe; only don't do that. For the love of Heaven, come up, Joe. I don't think I can hold on." But he did not hear me, but coolly let himself down again, while I hung desperately to the bar, with my head feeling like it would burst, and all the while that awful strain on my arms. I had never found them heavy before, but now they hung on me like lead.

And then followed a terrible thing, gentlemen—so terrible that I can never forget it, so terrible that it robs me of my sleep and haunts my dreams to this day. Suddenly, from among the spectators, sitting near the band, came a cry, not of terror, but of delight, and then a childish voice shouted out in the stillness, "Oh, Harry, Harry! Why, father, it's my brother Harry!" and then I heard a great cry of a thousand people, and then shouts and shrieks, and murmuring; and then I felt Joe coming up—and then, I hardly know how, I found myself beside him on the bar—him and Harry only! But where was Harry? I was dizzy and I could hardly see, and I seized him roughly by the arm, and fairly screamed the question. "He let go himself and fell when the young one on the benches yelled," said Joe, gasping for breath. "So help me Heaven, Bill, I did not do it, and I thank God that I did not!"

I looked stupidly down into the ring and saw it all, hardly understanding it yet. There was a gentleman in the ring and a golden-haired little boy, and they were bending over a shapeless, mangled thing in tinsel and gold—all that was left of poor little Harry. And then I saw the gentleman lift him up and go out of the ring, and the light-haired child weeping by his side; and then a kind of darkness and dizziness came over me, and I fainted.

I can forgive Joe the awful crime that had been in his heart; it was he who held me until a rope could be sent up to let me down by. And I found out then how it had been with Harry. Poor little fellow, hanging there by his feet, head down, and hearing a voice he had known in other days had been too much for him—he had let go his hold and fallen. He was quite dead of course when they took him up—quite dead and terribly crushed.

And that is all. The Blue Brothers did not perform that night nor any other night after that, for I never went into a swing with Joe again. I knew it had not been his fault—the accident; and for saving me, and because he was sincerely repentant, I forgave him that horrible threat. And I told him bitterly that I would keep my promise about the woman; only he swore, with tears in his eyes, that he should never see her again. Nor did I see her again either, for when I went back to New York she had gone off with another man, and I learned that about her that made me pity her, but which killed my love for her.

And, as I said before, that is all.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 388.)

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BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS.

THE OLD STORY.

BY JOE JOT, JR.

No matter how hard I strove
To keep his nature single-sided,
That simple boy has fallen in love,
And made a fool of himself—as I did.

I told him of the unsmooth road,
Love's doubtful fires so dimly lighted,
Of wild unrest and weary load:
He wants to prove it—just as I did.

That rogue from hence will not amount
To half of what he has heart sighted,
For now he will be no account,
And think of little else—as I did.

I told him all the folly of
(And in my logic much I prided),
And fallacies of childish love,
But precepts he disdained—as I did.

I told him there was ample time,
That there were higher things beside it,
The which to lose would be a crime,
But he got away—just as I did.

I told him love at twenty-one
Is very apt to be short-sighted;
At thirty it has steadier tone;
He thought so neither—just as I did.

There's business and arts of trade
To turn his thoughts to, I decided,
(The same wise words his grandfathers said)
And yet, he's gone and done—as I did.

A simple girl has warped his mind
Out of the course which I provided,
And the scapegrace is surely blind
To do the very thing—that I did!

I said that puppy love was vain,
And thought with me he coincided—
That youthful spoons are not sane;
And now he proves it—just as I did.

I spoke of heart-aches, jealous fears,
When youthful faiths are once confided,
How smiles will numberless than tears,
And yet he wouldn't—just as I did.

The scamp, he thinks he knows it all,
And took advice but to deride it;
A young scurvy's views are always small,
And so they go it—just as I did.

Our head but not our hearts are gray,
Dear wife, since first we were united,
Who knows but yet the rascal may
Have just the happy luck—that I did!

Schamyl,

THE CAPTIVE PRINCE:

OR,

The Cossack Envoy.

A Story of Russian Life and Adventure.

BY LAUNCE POYNTZ,

AUTHOR OF "LANCE AND LASSO," "THE SWORD-HUNTERS," "CAVALRY CUSTER," ETC.

X.

ZISKA HOFFMAN NO MORE!

WHEN one saw the brothers Schamyl together, it seemed wonderful that their relationship had never been suspected before. Prince Hamet Schamyl was taller than Ziska and larger in every way, but their faces were exactly alike. There were the same haughty aquiline profile of the true Caucasian type, the same dark curling hair, and both had the same large dark eyes. Their figures were very similar, and both had the same easy aristocratic air of superiority that marks the descendant of a noble family accustomed from infancy to be obeyed.

Between the two, and dressed much in the same style, was the tall and stalwart figure of the Grand Duke Michael, Nicholas's brother, to the Czar and Governor-General of the Caucasian Provinces. He seemed to be on friendly terms of comradeship with both his companions, for they were all talking French together with freedom. The escort behind them was composed of the dark-coated Daghestan Cossacks, with a number of glittering mail-clad Circassians, among whom Mustapha recognized several chiefs who had been stationed with their men at the opposite side of the valley ready for the contemplated attack.

Ziska Schamyl waved his hand to the old warrior as he rode up, and spoke to the Grand Duke. "Your imperial highness has been hunting Hadji Mustapha for several years, I believe. Yonder he stands."

The Governor-General uttered a surprised exclamation.

"Mon Dieu! it is possible? Hadji Mustapha, the insurgent chief who stirred up all Daghestan and the Terek district to revolt? Why, I thought him a strong young warrior."

"Of his strength there is no doubt," said Ziska, quietly. "If he is gray it is with plotting surprises for the troops that have barred him from his old home."

"Morbide! you are right," laughed the Grand Duke, in his good-natured manner. "He has given us as much trouble as my father had with yours."

"And when he has given his word, he will keep it as strictly as my father kept faith with your brother," said Hamet Schamyl, gravely. "Will your imperial highness greet him first, and do him honor? It is not every day his majesty has such a chance to strengthen the dominions of Russia."

"By all means," said the Grand Duke, heartily.

By this time they were close to the old man, who sat on his horse like a statue, his face set and stern. He was evidently undergoing a severe mental struggle. Then the big Russian prince advanced to him with a frank smile. All the royal family of the Romanoffs for several generations have been handsome, portly men, and Grand Duke Michael was no exception. He had the same winning courtesy which men of very high rank in Europe always cultivate, to be used on occasion. Having been in supreme command in the Caucasus for many years he was well acquainted with the mountain dialects, and at once addressed the old chief, saying:

"Hadji Mustapha, you and yours have fought the White Czar for many years like brave men, but when the sons of Schamyl have made peace, it is time for their father's old friend to make it too. I am empowered to offer you, as I offered the Emir Schamyl before you, the favor and protection of the Czar, if you will make peace. He will give you a house, servants and money, if you wish to remain at home."

Hadji Mustapha waved his hand. "I have sworn," he said. "I cannot take service with the Czar in Russian lands. I have done all I can to please the sons of Schamyl, but I must go where he went and die where he died."

"Be it so," said the prince, kindly. "You shall have your liberty on parole and the Czar will pay you a pension of ten thousand roubles, as long as the hill tribes are kept quiet. Will that do?"

"It is the will of Allah," said the old chief, with a sigh. "I have kept up the battle when others would have made peace, and they have rewarded me by deserting me at the last hour of the day. I will make peace, and the Tcherkess may serve the Czar if they will. I am with them no more."

"Then give me your hand and let us eat salt upon the agreement," said the Grand Duke. "After all what is a rascally Turk that he should come between us! The Turks have used the Tcherkess as a man uses his dogs. They have fought for him and he has kicked and starved them."

"It is true," said the old warrior. "Nevertheless, it is well that we heard the trumpet of Schamyl to-day, for great would have been the slaughter had a shot been fired instead."

The Grand Duke laughed again. "I believe it. But you see these young princes have more sense than you had. You

would have made a battle and killed some men, but you are no stronger than Schamyl, and he was glad to make peace at last. For every man you could have killed to-day Russia has a thousand and ready to take his place. It is enough. Let us come."

With the old warrior on his right hand and followed by the two sons of Schamyl, the Grand Duke Michael rode back into the Russian camp now filled with the light of morning.

As they rode along they passed the camp of regiment after regiment of cavalry, the men cleaning their horses or at breakfast, everything peaceful and quiet. They passed through the forest in the valley, on to the hard white road that had gleamed through the darkness when Ziska and the officer of the outpost rode off to find the governor-general. It was the great military road from Alexandropol to Kars. Now that it was morning one could see, not five miles away, the frowning towers and massive battlements of Alexandropol at the upper end of the long valley, and turning round to the other side the sun glinted back from far away on the gilded domes and minarets of Kars. It was a long way off in the low country, but still in plain view, dominated by the great isolated hill of the Kara Dag. The valley in which they were seemed to open out toward Kars, and one could see the white road go winding out of the mountain gorges toward it, over a country all sprinkled with white camps.

"You see, Hadji Mustapha," said the Grand Duke, pointing, "your three or four thousand men would have been a drop of water in the sea. Yonder are the camps of a hundred battalions of infantry."

"Andrei Alexandrovitch, I owe you the champagne," said a young officer of Cossacks to his friend. "You were right and I was wrong. Schamyl did have two sons."

"Champagne is good for a soldier, Vassilitch," said his comrade, smiling. "We will drink it together to the health of his majesty and the confusion of the Grand Turk, and we will invite Peter Michaeloff and the Baron Groganoff to help us, for if I do not mistake we shall see no more champagne after to-day, and in a week more many of us may not be alive to drink it."

"Agreed!" said his friend; and the two gay youngsters were soon running from tent to tent, summoning their friends to a feast which Russians are always ready to share.

"But you have not told us how you came to know all this about Schamyl's sons," said the Baron Groganoff, at table, to Andrei Alexandrovitch.

"Simple enough. I was a page at court, as you know, before I entered the guards."

"Yes, we know all that," said the king, who learned as a page," interrupted Vassilitch, laughing.

"Well, I learned how to play a better game of billiards than you'll play if you live a century, and if I did have to leave it was to my teacher the Jews were after me. But that's neither here nor there. I learned a good many court secrets while I was there, and one of them was that this Prince Hamet that they call the Emir Schamyl had a brother whom he had not seen since they were infants."

"Why not?" the old Schamyl had full liberty to enter the dominions of his majesty."

"He had; but I am inclined to think the old chief was foxy to the last. He kept his word with the Czar, and kept peace, but he would not stay in Russia. You know he died at Medina."

"I know it, but what has that to do with the two brothers? Don't be so long telling your story, Andrei."

"It has a good deal to do with it," said Andrei, in a tone of dignity. "You know that the emperor insisted on retaining Schamyl's eldest son at court as a hostage. He and I were boys together, and they taught the young savage just as if he had been one of noble Russian blood. I must say, though, that Andrei, brother to the Czar and Governor-General of the Caucasian Provinces, was a very quick man."

"As far as he was concerned the Czar had his wish, for the young chief is too much wedded to civilization and the gayeties of Moscow to wish to go back to his mountains."

"Days he has spent in the city of Vassilitch. These Tcherkess savages are strange beings, and always liable to relapse. He looks as much like a robber chief to-day, I'll swear, as he ever did."

"Maybe so, but he knows which side his bread is buttered," said Andrei. "You know he does not exchange a commission in the guards and a palace on the Newsky Prospect for a dingy, squalid hut in the mountains, when he can help himself, any more than you and I are here to-day because we like it. I ran through all I had, went into the city, and here I am to-day. *Voilà!* this prince has no such bad luck. The Czar is his banker."

"But what about the brother?" asked Groganoff.

"What do you know of him?"

"Well, as I said before, he and I were boys together, and he told me once that he had a brother whom he had never seen in his life. The old emir, determined to have two strings to his bow, had kept this second son away from Russia, but the Sultan of Turkey got hold of him."

"Ah, boys it's a grand thing to be of political importance. No sultans and czars will ever quarrel over me. The sultan offered to have the lad educated for a Turkish officer at the Paris Polytechnique, and he was sent there and to Bonn and Heidelberg, till they had crammed him with all sorts of learning. You know some of those Turks, educated abroad, are quite learned fellows, and this youngster had a Christian Georgian mother, so he ought to be better off for brains than a common Mussulman."

Vassilitch and the rest laughed. They were not so devout as Andrei.

"Well, so they say that this second son proved to have twice as much talent as the first, and had traveled all over the world, even out to America, where you may never be permitted to leave St. Petersburg. When the war came on, of course every one expected to hear of this one at Constantinople and in the Caucasus, but nobody expected that he would have the impudence to come to Russia. But he did."

"How do you know?"

"Heard it all from Dragonoffsky's son, who joined us last week; he told me. It seems this Ziska Schamyl did not even take the precaution of hiding his first name, but called himself Ziska Hoffman, American journalist, and came right to St. Petersburg; and old Dragonoffsky was completely fooled, too, by him. He took him for one of those prying Yankee correspondents, and thought to give him a fright. So he had him arrested, pretended to believe him an Austrian, and put a police spy over him, never dreaming who he was. The spy stuck to him, and what does this Ziska do but carry off the spy at Moscow into the midst of a lot of those Nihilists. How he got acquainted with them I do not know, but he seems to have been sharp enough for anything, and to have joined their body."

"Well, what else?" asked Groganoff. "How did he get here?"

"That's the queer part of the story, and the only man who can tell us was shot at Tiflis," said Andrei. "It seems that he and the Nihilists raised a regiment of Cossacks, and started to create a rebellion in favor of the Turks, and at the last moment he deserted the Nihilists and went over to the Czar's side. He only made one false move. He allowed the police spy to live, and the fellow was going to tell all the secrets of the Nihilists to the Grand Duke, when he was shot by a Circassian on the pretext of an old feud."

Groganoff laughed.

"I think I know more about that part of the story than you do, Andrei. I happened to be the officer of the guard the day the spy was shot. It was a great trick to stop the fellow's mouth, and the fellow who did it got off, too. It was the Grand Duke Michael's own order of the day."

"What?"

"Yes. I saw this Prince Hamet go in, and

soon after the spy came out, followed by the Grand Duke's orderly, who called for his horse. Of course, we thought nothing of it, except that he had orders to take somewhere. The spy stood near the gate of the court-yard, looking around him, and the orderly rode out past him till he was fairly in the street. Then he suddenly turned round, and shot down the poor wretch as cool as I'd shoot a hare. Next moment he was off full speed down the street, and we never saw him again. There was no time to telegraph. No one knew what it was all about. They even thought it was the Grand Duke's orders at first, till he came out and ordered an investigation. Nothing could be found out, but we all knew who had ordered it very soon."

"Who?"

"Why, Prince Hamet, of course! These mountaineers stick to each other like wax. The Czar sent him here to pacify the tribes and make friends with his brother. He saw that his brother's friends, the Nihilists, were likely to be betrayed. Who knows? He may be a Nihilist himself! At all events, he saved their secret by killing the traitor, and the murderer fled to the hills. Who is going to catch him for shooting a spy?"

"And what brought the other one here to-day?"

"Why, common sense of course! He's not been at Paris and New York for nothing. Any fool can see which is the winning side to be on in this war, and he and his brother have done well to make good terms with the Grand Duke. I hear they are to be given high commands in the army. Why not? They have played their cards well, and the sons of Schamyl deserve well of Russia."

THE END

Little Lightning,

THE BOY ROBBER.

BY OLL COOMES.

AN evening wind toyed with the feathery robes of the greenwood trees, and wafted the balsamic odors of the forest through the valley. The Fairy's Cascade sang musically under the azaleas, as if to cheer up the spirit of the man pacing to and fro under a stately pine near the water's brink.

The man could not have been over five-and-twenty, and was possessed of a handsome face, whose features told of a brave, kind heart, and a gallant, dashing spirit in Captain Ben Marrow.

"Yes, we know all that," said the king, who learned as a page," interrupted Vassilitch, laughing.

"Well, I learned how to play a better game of billiards than you'll play if you live a century, and if I did have to leave it was to my teacher the Jews were after me. But that's neither here nor there. I learned a good many court secrets while I was there, and one of them was that this Prince Hamet that they call the Emir Schamyl had a brother whom he had not seen since they were infants."

"Why not?" the old Schamyl had full liberty to enter the dominions of his majesty."

"He had; but I am inclined to think the old chief was foxy to the last. He kept his word with the Czar, and kept peace, but he would not stay in Russia. You know he died at Medina."

"I know it, but what has that to do with the two brothers? Don't be so long telling your story, Andrei."

"It has a good deal to do with it," said Andrei, in a tone of dignity. "You know that the emperor insisted on retaining Schamyl's eldest son at court as a hostage. He and I were boys together, and they taught the young savage just as if he had been one of noble Russian blood. I must say, though, that Andrei, brother to the Czar and Governor-General of the Caucasian Provinces, was a very quick man."

"As far as he was concerned the Czar had his wish, for the young chief is too much wedded to civilization and the gayeties of Moscow to wish to go back to his mountains."

"Days he has spent in the city of Vassilitch. These Tcherkess savages are strange beings, and always liable to relapse. He looks as much like a robber chief to-day, I'll swear, as he ever did."

"Maybe so, but he knows which side his bread is buttered," said Andrei. "You know he does not exchange a commission in the guards and a palace on the Newsky Prospect for a dingy, squalid hut in the mountains, when he can help himself, any more than you and I are here to-day because we like it. I ran through all I had, went into the city, and here I am to-day. *Voilà!* this prince has no such bad luck. The Czar is his banker."

"But what about the brother?" asked Groganoff.

"What do you know of him?"

"Well, as I said before, he and I were boys together, and he told me once that he had a brother whom he had never seen in his life. The old emir, determined to have two strings to his bow, had kept this second son away from Russia, but the Sultan of Turkey got hold of him."

"Ah, boys it's a grand thing to be of political importance. No sultans and czars will ever quarrel over me. The sultan offered to have the lad educated for a Turkish officer at the Paris Polytechnique, and he was sent there and to Bonn and Heidelberg, till they had crammed him with all sorts of learning. You know some of those Turks, educated abroad, are quite learned fellows, and this youngster had a Christian Georgian mother, so he ought to be better off for brains than a common Mussulman."

Vassilitch and the rest laughed. They were not so devout as Andrei.

"Well, so they say that this second son proved to have twice as much talent as the first, and had traveled all over the world, even out to America, where you may never be permitted to leave St. Petersburg. When the war came on, of course every one expected to hear of this one at Constantinople and in the Caucasus, but nobody expected that he would have the impudence to come to Russia. But he did."

"How do you know?"

"Heard it all from Dragonoffsky's son, who joined us last week; he told me. It seems this Ziska Schamyl did not even take the precaution of hiding his first name, but called himself Ziska Hoffman, American journalist, and came right to St. Petersburg; and old Dragonoffsky was completely fooled, too, by him. He took him for one of those prying Yankee correspondents, and thought to give him a fright. So he had him arrested, pretended to believe him an Austrian, and put a police spy over him, never dreaming who he was. The spy stuck to him, and what does this Ziska do but carry off the spy at Moscow into the midst of a lot of those Nihilists. How he got acquainted with them I do not know, but he seems to have been sharp enough for anything, and to have joined their body."

"Well, what else?" asked Groganoff. "How did he get here?"

"That's the queer part of the story, and the only man who can tell us was shot at Tiflis," said Andrei. "It seems that he and the Nihilists raised a regiment of Cossacks, and started to create a rebellion in favor of the Turks, and at the last moment he deserted the Nihilists and went over to the Czar's side. He only made one false move. He allowed the police spy to live, and the fellow was going to tell all the secrets of the Nihilists to the Grand Duke, when he was shot by a Circassian on the pretext of an old feud."

Groganoff laughed.

"I think I know more about that part of the story than you do, Andrei. I happened to be the officer of the guard the day the spy was shot. It was a great trick to stop the fellow's mouth, and the fellow who did it got off, too. It was the Grand Duke Michael's own order of the day."

"What?"

"Yes. I saw this Prince Hamet go in, and

out their host. Ben Marrow and his men were old plainsmen, and stood their ground like veterans. They opened a deadly fire upon the robbers, and the conflict would soon have been decided had not eight more robbers come to the assistance of their friends from down the pass. The odds were now against the train men, but they fought desperately. Every man was a crack pistol-shot, and the robbers tumbled from their animals in a manner that attested the fact.

The plainsmen had the advantage of being on foot. They could dodge here and there behind their wagons, and fire from cover upon the mounted robbers. The latter, however, or those that had not been already unhorsed by the trainmen's bullets, dismounted and engaged the captain and his men hand-to-hand.

During the conflict Ben Marrow became separated from his companions, and found himself engaged with two of the road-agents. The robbers of all three had been emptied, and they fought hand-to-hand. Marrow was being closely pressed, when Little Lightning, himself, dashed from behind a point of rocks, and threw himself from his horse, rushed forward, revolver in hand, shouting in a boyish tone:

"Spare that man! spare Ben Marrow, men!"

Scarcely had the words fallen from his lips ere two of Ben Marrow's friends, coming to their captain's rescue, shot Little Lightning and the two robbers dead in their tracks.

A wild, agonized cry burst from the Boy Robber's lips, as he sank down, pressing his mask close to his face.

His face concealed. Ben laid the limp, lifeless hand aside, and raising the mask, gazed upon the face of the Boy Robber. But at the same instant a cry burst from his lips; he reeled and clutched at his brow, and would have fallen had a comrade not caught him.

"Ben, what ails you?" his friend exclaimed.

"Look, Percy! Oh, God! look at that face!"

Percy gazed upon the face of the Boy Robber. A cry burst from his lips, for he saw that the face of Little Lightning was that of Inez, the idol of Red Pine! She was the mysterious Boy Robber.

Of this there was no doubt in the mind of Ben Marrow, for upon a finger of the small white hand, that now lay lifeless and limp, flashed the signet of their betrothal.

Inez's love had only been a blind to draw the wealth of Marrow's train into the possession of her followers; but the brave, handsome and wicked woman paid the penalty of her deception with her life.

And so the day of her birth was the day of her death; and the wine that was to have been drunk to her health by Ben Marrow and his men, remained untouched; and as the sun of August the twentieth went down, it shone for the last time upon all that remained upon earth of Inez La Jose.

BY JOE E. BADGER, JR.

John Smith reined in his horses with a quick, strong pull, staring fixedly ahead of him at the spot where he had just caught a glimpse of a dark figure as it plunged hastily into the bushes which the road was so thickly lined.

"That portion of Kansas had not the best reputation for law-abiding honesty on the part of its floating population. Horse-stealing was common, highway robbery no very unusual occurrence, while more than one murder had been committed that summer."

Knowing this, and knowing, too, that he carried several hundred dollars upon his person, the proceeds of a few cattle, John Smith felt rather uncomfortable as he realized that the weapons of more than one assassin might at that moment be bearing upon his head.

Drawing a revolver, he wrapped the reins around his left hand, intending to run the gantlet—when the dark figure crept out into the road close beside him, with clasped hands uplifted, and a white face lighted by two great appealing eyes.

"Oh! sir, you do not look like a bad man! Save me from them—do not let them overtake me—they will murder me!"

John Smith was young, and, under ordinary circumstances, so bashful that a girl of a dozen years could render him miserably uncomfortable for an hour with a single glance; but now, as he saw that fair, pale face, and heard that sweet, fear-shaken voice, somehow his whole nature seemed to undergo a change. Bending over the side of the road, he clasped the little, graceful figure in his strong hands, gently lifting the woman into the wagon beside him.

"No one shall hurt you while I live," he said, simply. "Tell me where you wish to go, and I will take you there."

"Any place—any place—away from here!" panted the young woman. "They are hunting me—they may come out upon us at any moment. For the love of heaven, kind sir, drive on!"

John Smith gave his horses their heads and touched them up with the whip. As the wagon moved rapidly ahead, the young woman drew a long breath, and then her rigid muscles seemed to give way all at once. John was peering down at her, and he saw the black eyes close and the red lips grow white. Instinct told him that his strange passenger was nearly fainting, and to guard against her falling from the high spring-seat, his left arm stole around her and he drew her closer to his side, until the little head rested just over his rapidly thumping heart. He dared not risk a halt, and so did the best he knew how.

All too soon for him—for somehow John found there was a peculiar, intoxicating pleasure in thus being burdened—the young woman recovered, and drew her thick, heavy veil over her face. John wanted to speak, but he didn't know how to begin. There were busy doubts in his brain, and he not more than half-awake.

"Hold on one minute, stranger!"

The tone was loud and peremptory, and John saw that three men had most effectively blocked his way, standing in the road before his startled horse.

In such emergencies men think rapidly. Were these men simple footpads, or were they the enemies against whom his strange passenger had claimed his protection?

Had he been alone, John would have tried a bold dash for life and his money, but just now he could only think of the woman who was sitting so straight and so still by his side. He could not risk the chance of a bullet's striking her.

"Well, what's wanted?" he asked, after a moment's hesitation.

"We want a ride, me an' my mates," promptly responded the spokesman. "You needn't be afear'd. We ain't thieves, ner we don't mean you no harm."

"So much the better for us both, then," replied John, with an assumed sneer, but a trait which he was far from feeling. "Had I been alone,

you might have got a sharper answer than you counted on."

The big man laughed as he climbed into the wagon, followed by his companions.

"You can ride if you like," added John making a virtue of necessity. "I am not going much further on this road, though."

The big man was standing close behind the seat, and steadying himself with one hand upon John's shoulder. He bent his head and endeavored to penetrate the thick veil that covered the woman's face.

"Your wife, I reckon?" he asked.

John felt a little elbow dig into his side, and promptly took the hint.

"Yes, she is my wife. She's been making a visit to her mother's, in town. She's getting over a bad spell of the smallpox."

The big man drew his head back with a snort of disgustful alarm. John felt a little paw press his arm approvingly, and immediately caught himself wishing that his story was indeed a true one.

"I didn't know," said the big man, hurriedly. "She looked so much like a gal we was huntin'—same size, same kind o' clothes. Didn't know but you'd picked her up 'long the road. She run away from home last night. She's crazy. You ain't seen nothin' of sech, I don't guess, stranger?"

"That girl we met. I knowed there was somethin' wrotz about her, she looked so wild!"

John Smith could scarcely believe his ears. The strange woman was speaking, but the voice was high-pitched and unpleasant, with a strong nasal twang. But once more the little hand sent the blood thrilling through his veins, and as promptly he took the hint.

"How fur back?" eagerly demanded the big man.

"Good two miles beyond where we met you. We spoke to her, but she dodged into the bushes and hid. I thought there was something wrong, but I dare not stop long, my wife was so—"

There was no need of his finishing the sentence. With a furious oath, the big man leaped out of the wagon, and, with two more fellows, ran swiftly back the way they came.

"How can I thank you?" and it was the soft, sweet voice that spoke now.

"By not trying to thank me, and by letting me take you home. Mother and my sisters will be glad to serve you all they can."

"You know nothing of me—"

"Only that you are in trouble, and that is enough. We are poor farm-people, but we can be good and true friends. I know that fellow told when he said you were crazy. Look! Yonder is the light in our window. We are 'most home now."

An hour later the strange young woman was seated in the midst of the Smith family, telling